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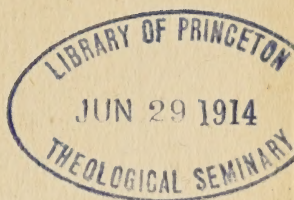




Byron Palmer

# GOD'S WHITE THRONE

A Rational, Evangelical Theodicy



BY

THE REV. BYRON PALMER, A. M., S. T. D.

*"And I saw a great white throne, and  
Him that sat on it."—REV. XX, 11*

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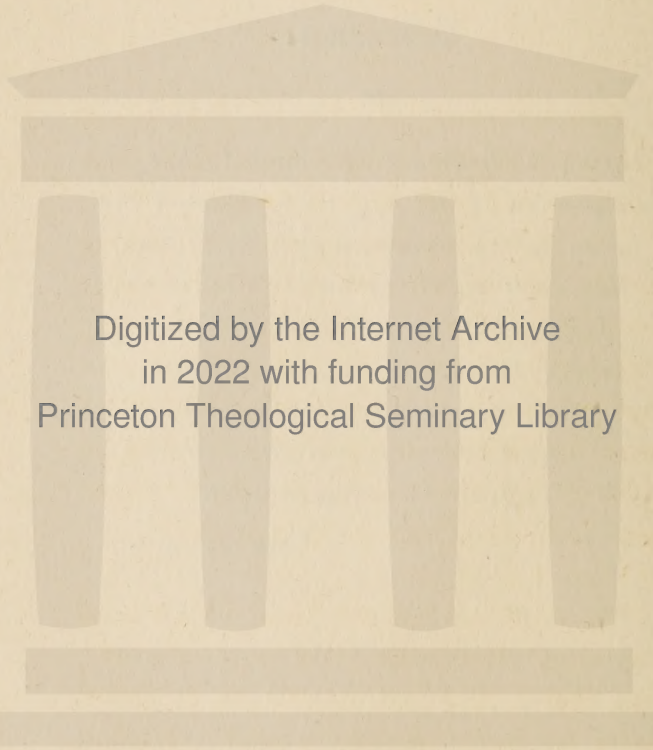
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## Dedication



*I rejoice to dedicate this book to her, the companion of my life, who, through the years of my suffering and invalidism, has been unfailing in her Christian faith and fortitude, and by her cheerfulness, courage, and devotion has made life sweeter, hope brighter, and given to suffering a compensation.*

THE AUTHOR.



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## PREFACE.



SEVERAL years ago, in reading the life of Charles Kingsley, I came upon these lines which he had written to a friend:—

“I am writing nothing now; but taking breath and working in the parish—never better than I am at present; with many blessings, and, awful confession for mortal man, no sorrows! I sometimes think there must be terrible arrears of sorrow to be paid off by me—that I may be as other men are! God help me in that day!”

Again he wrote:—

“I am better off now than I have been for years! God be thanked, and God grant, too, that I may not require to be taken down by some terrible trouble. I often fancy I shall be. If I am, I shall deserve

it as much as any man who ever lived. I say so now—justifying God beforehand lest I shall not have faith and patience enough to justify him when the punishment comes.”

I was deeply impressed by the fears and finally the experiences of that good man. For the “terrible trouble” did come to him at last. I wondered whether I should have the patience to endure and faith enough in God not to doubt or despair in case the hand of affliction ever should be laid upon me as heavily as I saw it resting upon many whom I knew.

I was then in the vigor of perfect health joyfully anticipating many years of service in the work which I had just begun and loved so much.

I had seen what seemed to be strange workings of providence affecting the lives of others, and had tried to encourage hope and faith and cheer in those who were bowed with sorrow or baffled with unbelief.

But as I had had no experience in the things that troubled others, I felt that what I said and did to help them must have been to them only a professional echo and not a voice out of a life that was capable of real sympathy.

Before my own life of suffering in silence and seclusion began, the larger problems of darkness and disorder in the world, and in human life in general, were driven home to me by a conversation which I had with a noted infidel. He doubted the existence of a God who took any interest in human life, and denied that there was any goodness or wisdom in the order of the world. He declared that there was no good God, no moral government—all was heartless, blind, inexorable law; this and nothing more.

I felt that this was not true, but to myself I had to confess that sometimes it did look that way.

When at last came the ordeal of being



shut away from the world, and of leaving my life's work, and of being compelled to accept the life and the lot of a daily sufferer, my mind naturally turned to the problems which experience had made uppermost in my daily meditations. It became necessary for me to seek and find a satisfactory solution of, not only the problem of personal suffering, but of the larger problems of human life and destiny, of the apparent misadjustments in the world, of the seeming contradictions in the course of providence, of the absence of order in divine government, and the apparent defeat of righteousness and truth in the world.

In seeking for mental and spiritual peace in the midst of my own suffering and disappointment, I came to see as never before that the problem of personal experience did not stand alone, but was related to and was a part of every problem that involves the beneficence and wisdom of God's moral government in the world. My

quest for peace of mind and heart therefore led me away from myself to the infinitely larger world without and to the relation which every soul sustains in the moral harmony of things in divine government. Not until then did I experience the faith in God and the patience to abide by his wisdom and goodness which gave me rest.

This book is therefore in a certain sense the author's experience in his effort to discover the ways and the will of God. But in a truer sense it is an effort to help all who are troubled with doubt and disbelief either from personal experience or from their observations in the dark hemisphere of the world's life. To all such the author extends his sympathy and the help which his experience may afford. Cordially,

BYRON PALMER.

ASHTABULA, OHIO, June, 1904.





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# GOD'S WHITE THRONE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE DARK HEMISPHERE.

WE live in a world of mystery. No matter which way we turn we are sure to meet with mystery before we have gone far. From the very nature of things deep shadows are cast all about us, and their darkness is not all dissolved by any view of life that we may take, however optimistic it may be, or by any conception of the world however comprehensive. The lives of some are cheered by greater joys and brighter hopes than others, scarcely a shadow falls upon them; while others dwell in the darkness with only an occasional star to bless them with its beam of holy light. It is therefore not taking a somber view of life and the world to recognize

the dark things that are matters of common experience and observation with all men.

Consider the planet on which we live. Its surface is three-fourths a restless water waste, the grave already of millions of human beings. Of the remaining land surface a very large part is composed of dreary deserts, rock-ribbed mountain ranges and vast territories that are rendered uninhabitable by perpetual ice and snow. Devastating storms sweep away life and property, and drouths burn and blast the fruit of man's toil and sacrifice. The thin crust is shaken by subterranean explosions, and internal fires belch forth and burn and bury the helpless and the innocent. The history of the earth as recorded in the rocks reveals ages of agony and warfare among the extinct tribes of the lower animals, and natural history seems to indicate that the living species exist for the sole purpose of preying on one another.



The human race itself has a history that makes one heartsick to read. Pillage, bloodshed, and warfare have been characteristic of civilized nations but little less than of savage tribes. The brute nature has predominated. Intellectual and moral greatness have not been the chief glory and pursuit of the race. Some progress has been made, but what a record! From the time the race emerged from the mist of oblivion it has been a sluggish, stupid stream that has wound its weary way through the tanglewood and marsh of time, having its stagnations, its backwaters, and its divided currents; and these for the most part have lost their way. As a whole, the race is still a seething mass of helpless, undeveloped, stupid creatures. One-half of the world do not have enough food to eat, or clothes and shelter sufficient to keep them decent and comfortable. There are hundreds of millions of human beings in

the nations of the Orient, eastern Europe, the Dark Continent, and in the crowded cities of both hemispheres, who are of little or no good to the world. One hundred million inhabitants might be swept from existence in the heart of China, and the world would move on without missing them.

Is there a God who rules this world and who cares for the children of his creation? What then of the plagues and epidemics and pestilences and famines and storms and earthquakes and disasters by sea and by land that have swept multiplied millions of his children from the earth as though they were of no more value than as many insects? What of the suffering and poverty and idiocy and insanity and dumbness and deafness and blindness and deformity and injustice and slander and persecution and crime and corrupt morals and disease and death from which the good as well as the evil must suffer? What of the reptiles and vermin and parasites and bacteria and

thistles and thorns and noxious weeds? Why is there never a day or an hour when one's life and health and property and good name are not imperiled? Why should we ever be driven round between the upper and nether millstones of hope and fear?

In a world where beneficence is supposed to be the order of government it should be expected that truth and beauty and goodness not only predominate, but are so general that evil in every form would seek a hiding-place, and when seen would be so well defined as to be recognized and so hideous as to be abhorred by even the most unwary. But such does not seem to be the case. Sin is ever visible and often more attractive than virtue, and offers its reward of pleasure at once, reserving its sorrows for a day of reckoning; while virtue comes only at the cost of sacrifice and withholds its crown of rejoicing for some future time. There may be means of some kind for the relief of all

suffering and remedies for all diseases, but they are hidden from us as yet, and man must still remain as in the past, the ignorant but innocent victim of excruciating torture and incurable maladies. There has been progress made in medicine and a little more in surgery, but why were these hints and helps so hard to find and so long in coming to man's relief? If in a beneficent world there should be such a thing as heredity, we might expect to inherit the perfections of our fathers; but we find we are heirs of their imperfections also. We are bound by the fetters of the past, and the future is bound by the present. The diseases and weaknesses and deformity and inebriety and mental aberrations and moral defects of our fathers are visited upon their children, and the generations coming will be cursed by the crimes and misfortunes of this.

What is true of heredity is true of solidarity. We are by nature social beings,



and human society is so intimately organized that no man can live unto himself alone. Consciously or otherwise all men reciprocally influence each other for good or for evil. But why for evil? Why not for good alone? Why must an honest man suffer because others by their dishonesty have shaken the confidence of his fellow-men? Why must a worthy, aspiring youth who happens to come from a disreputable family or community be despised and discriminated against as though no good thing could come out of Nazareth? Why should the industrious and the frugal be burdened by the necessities of the idle and the shiftless? Why must good government and good society often be defeated and ever be imperiled by the criminal, the pauper, and the ignorant elements. The law works for good as well as evil, it is true; but why must the helpless and the innocent suffer under its operations?

Again, why should the truth be so ob-

scure? Why should truth and error be so mixed that the world must ever be so mistaken as to their identity? Had the truth been clearly defined, who can imagine what a different course the history of the world would have taken? Think of the wars and persecutions and political and religious strife and doctrinal controversies that have arisen from error, ignorance, and intolerance! Think of the bloody work of the guillotine, the stake, the gibbet, the scaffold, the block, the dungeon, the rack, and the hundred other torturous inventions of fiendish ingenuity for extorting confession and extinguishing the light of freedom and truth, all because error and truth have been so mixed that even the wise and conscientious have been mistaken and thought they were doing God's service in persecuting the righteous! Among the lower animals instinct is the sure guide, and for man's animal life instinct and a small degree of intelligence is sufficient; but for emanci-

pation of the mind and the upward flight of the soul's aspirations, for peace of heart and joy of hope, for sure knowledge of the truth and the right and an undisturbed confidence in a beneficent end for the world and human life, is it not strange that we have not more to help us and less to hinder? Yes, we have the Bible; but hundreds of sects and tens of thousands of teachers differ and divide on what the Bible means. Some say it is not inspired, some say it is inspired a little, some say it is inspired in places, while others say every word is inspired. Besides only a comparatively small part of the human family have ever seen the Bible as yet. There are other sacred books and other religions besides Christianity. Is the Bible the exclusive book of revelation? Why then does so large a part of the world yet sit in darkness, and why did so many centuries pass after the full revelation was given before its sacred pages were put in print and

placed in the hands of the common people for their comfort and instruction?

Why did so many thousand years go by before the world's Redeemer came, and why was not some provision made for the immediate spread of his truth and grace among all nations? What do the dead and forgotten nations and literature and arts and civilizations and achievements of the early centuries of history signify for the present age? Why should we have to dig among the ruins of ancient cities and desecrate the tombs of the dead to find only a few chance fragments of the arts and culture and history and religious beliefs of antiquity? Is the human race a degenerate offspring from perfect parents, spotless from their Maker's hand, or is man the product of an almost endless process of evolution which began countless ages ago, of which firemist, protoplasm, mollusk, monkey, man, is an epitome? Is death the end? Where are the departed, and why



may we not hold fellowship with them? Why should such a large per cent of the race die in infancy, and so few of those who survive ever rise above the plane of the animal life? Why should men and women having great promise of usefulness to the world so often die just when they are most needed and best prepared to do good, while others who are so wicked and worthless that it would have been better for the world had they never been born, are permitted to live on to curse the world rather than bless it? Why should parents be taken away leaving families of innocent orphans helpless and homeless? Why should so many who violate about every law of good health and pure morals still be healthy, prosperous, and popular, while others who practice plain living and high thinking, serving God and their fellow-men faithfully, become broken in health and spend the rest of their lives suffering in silence?

If there is light there is also darkness;

if truth, there is error usually mixed with it; if goodness, there is evil always near it, often looking even more attractive and better than the good; if songs of joy, they all have their notes of sadness. Alas, the list of evils that look like stains upon God's white throne is almost endless, and the darkness that occasions doubt deepens as one tries to enumerate and explain the mysteries that make up the dark hemisphere of our world's life.

But there is light along the horizon. If doubts arise, let us look to the light. If we despair, let us still keep our eyes fixed on the light. If hope should disappear, let us all the more resolutely keep our eyes on the golden promise of the morning. There is no other light, and the darkness is only a passing night. It is but temporal. The light is eternal. God is its source.

## CHAPTER II.

### VANQUISHED FAITH.

FAITH in God is the normal attitude of the soul in the presence of all the unexplainable problems of human life. It seems to be a higher activity of the soul than reason, and is commissioned to lead in realms where reason loses its way. Where knowledge fails it is the function of faith to over-reach the narrower limits of the mind and lay firm hold upon the very substance of eternal realities. But naturally it is easier for us to believe what we can demonstrate, and when we can not demonstrate to doubt. Unfortunately we are so constituted.

But should there be any who do not doubt at times, the absence of doubt should not be considered a proof of the presence

of faith. In the absence of tests, faith may be simply a passive mental process having no moral content whatever. To be merely an heir or recipient of what others have believed is not faith, for faith implies mental and moral activity. He who has never suffered in the dungeon of doubt may well wonder whether he yet has had enough experience in the perplexing things of life to put to the test what faith he may possess. Or he may question whether he knows enough of the ways of God to have any good ground for what he believes, or be sure that he really believes much of anything.

But, supposing there are those whose faith never fails them even in the severest tests, there are many more who are equally earnest, whose faith often gives way to doubt and despair on account of the dark things of the world and life. For the presence of so much physical and moral evil in a world that is thought to be governed by



a beneficent God has caused more believers to doubt, and has driven to despair more seekers after truth than perhaps any other fact of human experience. Nor is this surprising. When we think of the uncertainty, obscurity, physical evil, and moral disorder that exist, the wonder is that there are not even more who doubt whether there be any good providence and moral order in the world. Evil and error of every kind have wrought such ruin and still run riot to such a degree that it looks as though there were an almost infinite demon at work in the world, whose mischief makes about as much misery as God's goodness gives of peace and happiness.

In the presence of such mysteries both reason and faith are often hurled back in defeat, and doubt and despair triumph.

But there is an attribute in every man that is sufficiently divine to cause him to abhor the idea of an unrighteous, unholy, and unwise God. He would rather have no

God at all than such an one. He would take refuge in atheism, rather than think that the infinite God is an evil-doer and the author of all the sufferings of the world, or in his helplessness is unable to prevent it.

It is therefore the creed of some and the thought of most people at times, that there is an evil one, some rival power who is the foe of God and the human race, who is the author of all this darkness and destruction. They will not have it that an infinitely good and wise God is responsible for so much confusion in his world. They therefore vindicate God and indict the devil, who it seems is almost equal to God and in much gets the best of him. If this could be done it would be an easy way for us to justify our impatience in times of trouble. We could then charge them up to the devil and be as vindictive as we wished. But it would not be so easy a matter to point out where infinite wisdom and goodness end, and where the evil work begins;

or what is good, and to whom and under what circumstances it is such. Any attempt to point out what is the work of divine goodness in this world, and what the mischief of a demon, would be preposterous.

But should we succeed in escaping the difficulty that perplexes us by attributing all that we call evil to a demon or any number of demons, instead of believing God is responsible for it, we are at once plunged into another that is equally perplexing to both our mental and moral natures. The universe would be divided against itself. God having abdicated his throne of absolute sovereignty, has divided his authority with an evil power whose energies are all devoted to confusion and destruction. But two rulers whose powers are in any proportion to the good and the evil that exist would be a fatal dualism. The attempt to explain existing evils in this way may indeed be worthy of an honest soul who cher-

ishes and clings to his faith in God, but others would get no comfort from it. The rock that may be a firm foundation for his faith would wreck and ruin the faith of others. There is a more satisfactory course than this, as we shall see. God does not share his authority with another, and yet his throne is white.

There are many who do not pretend to understand or attempt an explanation of the dark and crushing facts of life. They do not doubt God's goodness, and yet they can not believe that all things work together for good to themselves or to others, even though they love God and try to do his will. They are not stoical or indifferent toward suffering. They feel deeply, and desire a smoother and firmer path for their feet. They wonder why there should be so little in life for them to enjoy, and so little for them to hope for in the future. To them the world is dark and life drags heavily. Bruised and brokenhearted, they bow

to the inevitable and spend their days in sorrow. Like a bird with a broken wing, they look upward, but can not fly. Hope they have not. Faith has failed them, but—God has not.

Others are so self-centered that all is well while matters go well with them. They can look upon the calamities that befall others and maintain a well poised faith. They may even reprove them for their lack of faith and their inability to see some good providence in their griefs and misfortunes. But let broken health and blasted hopes once come to them; let misfortune come their way and deprive them of position or property or reputation or loved ones; let their lot be no more than falls to the average man; then they are of all men most miserable. They will not be comforted. Sympathy is only mockery. God will not answer their prayers. He has abandoned them entirely, or is dealing with them too harshly. Their sufferings are unjust.



They lose faith in both man and God. The world is dreary, and life is to them not worth living. To work and to weep is their unhappy lot. They wish they never had been born. Out of the world: out of misery, they think. And yet this is the best conceivable world for them to live in. For not in the world, but within their own selves resides the power to make life sweeter than any song or richer than treasures of gold.

There are those too who have no faith in a supremely wise God, simply because they can not see wisdom and beneficence in the adjustments of the world. If there is a God and he governs in the affairs of men, they are opposed to his government. If they were to administer the governing forces of the world it would be managed better. Their self-esteem is sufficient to lead them to think that, had they been consulted about creation, they could have offered suggestions, which, had they been fol-

lowed, would have brought into existence a better world than we have.

In all candor it will have to be admitted by every one that to the finite mind this world is an infinite enigma. But with equal candor it must also be admitted that inability to understand is no justification for doubt. Ought the child doubt his parents' love and wisdom because he can not understand why they require of him obedience and reverence, and deny him pleasures that are detrimental? Supposing the child to be entirely incapable of comprehending the wisdom and foresight of his parents, and what they believe to be for the highest good and happiness of their child, should the child still be commended for his disobedience and doubt, and the parents be censured for withholding from him the knowledge of things he can not comprehend?

We dwell in a world that is only as a pin-point on a mountain side when compared with God's vast universe, and our

life is but as a flash of candle-light to the eternally blazing sun, when compared with the numberless cycles of eternity throughout whose vastness the omniscient Mind moves with a perfect knowledge of the beginning and the end of all things. Should we then doubt God because we do not understand his motives and methods? Intolerable vanity and audacity might lead to this, but humility and modesty *never*.

Vanquished faith often takes the form of pessimism. Bad as the world is, it is continually growing worse. Evil and error are stronger and more prevalent than virtue and truth. Civilization is only barbarism made more cruel by refinement. The tendency of the human race is downward. Everything is undergoing a process of degeneration. There is no bow of promise arching the path of the world and no beneficent goal toward which the world is moving. Men, society, and nature alike are not to be trusted. Self-interest is the end

sought, and the end justifies any successful means, even though truth and justice and virtue must be sacrificed in the effort. Christianity has departed from the life and teachings of its Founder, and the Churches which are supposed to exemplify Christ to the world are void of his life, his love, his truth, and his spirit of sacrifice. God is not in the world as a factor for good. But fortunately for the world there are comparatively few whose faithlessness takes this unhappy form, and as the world continues to grow better and brighter their number will ever grow less.

Dead faith is always more dangerous than honest doubt, for honest doubt has life and conscience and has its face toward the light, while dead faith gropes in the darkness, not even feeling after God and caring little for the light. Such a type of vanquished faith is the quite prevalent belief that God is so great and so far removed from men that it is unworthy of him to

take them into account or feel in any sense obligated to them. Men are his creatures, and he has a right to do with them as he pleases. If he rules them with a rod of iron, what are they that they should protest or ask a reason why? It is for them to take what comes, and let things go as they may. From eternity the decree went forth fixing every man's fate, and nothing that he may do can better his condition or benefit the world. This is God's world absolutely. Good and evil, hope and despair, right and wrong, happiness and misery, life and death, are all equally his appointments, and they are unalterable. Stoically or sorrowfully we must take what comes, and be silent.

As an article of faith, as well as a principle for practical life, such a conception amounts to nothing short of harmful unbelief. It takes from God the attribute of condescending, fatherly love for his children, and it discourages the sense of re-



sponsibility, paralyzes good endeavor, does violence to the sense of justice in men, and quickens in them none of the finer feelings of spirituality. Instead of Sovereign, subject, and government, let us think of Father, family, and home. Such conceptions exalt God, elevate man to his proper relation with God, and give significance and inspiration to human life.

Closely related to this fatalistic form of vanquished faith is that which removes God entirely from the world. He transcends the world so far that he takes no thought for it, and feels no interest in his creatures. He created the world and established its goings according to fixed laws, and made it and all living things capable of self-perpetuation, and then ceased to be even an interested observer of the world's movements. According to this view the world is sufficient for all our wants, and we are left to make the best of it in satisfying them. There is no personal providence.

We are left to the cold mercies of heartless nature, which, though impartial, takes no thought for the peculiar needs of the individual. There is no revelation of God or inspiration from him except what nature affords, and that is sufficient. From the study of nature's laws and nature's wisdom we are to learn our duty and our destiny. There is no place for prayer. All answers to human supplications are but echoes of the soul's secret desires. There is no salvation except that which we achieve in co-operation with nature, no knowledge of God except what nature affords, and no hope of a future life except the soul's inextinguishable longings for immortality.

This type of disbelief is not occasioned by a serious contemplation of the dark things of the world and a failure to find some ground of consolation and hope, so much as by an unsound philosophy and an unethical conception of the nature of God.

As a system it hardly does credit to the mind, while the heart of every man protests against it and calls for clearer light when the soul is allowed to speak.

Honest doubt, for there is such, is always deserving of sympathy rather than censure. Nor is there anything gained in treating with contempt and severity the doubt that may be born of insincerity. To be fair and frank is the best course. Reasonableness and charity toward minds and hearts that are perplexed and depressed is the only method that is productive of good results. We shall try to show that while doubt may have its occasion, faith has firm ground, and for that reason is more justifiable than doubt, and in the rising soul will win at last.

But let the doubter bear in mind that faith is a law of social and commercial life, that society would not hold together without it, that commerce would at once be blocked should men cease to believe in each

other when they can not see and understand. Let him also remember that all science and all philosophy have their beginnings with hypotheses that must be assumed. Even mathematics, the most exact of all the sciences, rests upon axioms that can not be proven, but are self-evident, and must be accepted on faith. Once doubt that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and not believe it until it is proven, and all higher mathematics goes to pieces. So in jurisprudence, in society, in commerce, in science, in philosophy, the only way to progress is to believe everything that can be believed, and doubt nothing until it is proven to be false. Likewise, in endeavoring to penetrate the mysteries of the world and life we must believe, even if we can not understand. Mystery does not mean that there is no truth, but that the truth lies beyond our grasp. Truth and goodness are never against reason, but they are largely beyond reason,

waiting and welcoming our ability to comprehend them. The path to truth and joy and hope is, then, to believe unfalteringly that wisdom and goodness are in the plan of this world, and from that point as a beginning, take our departure with our faces ever toward the light, and the end will be peace.



### CHAPTER III.

#### GOD REIGNS.

THAT God is, that he is infinitely wise and good, and that his wisdom and goodness are everywhere manifest, both in his creation and in the interest that he takes in the affairs of men, is the only conception of him that fully satisfies the human mind and heart. But that other things are set forth as substitutes for God is very well known.

We hear of the “laws of nature;” and, from what is said of them and of what they do, it would seem that they are about equal to God and make a very good substitute for him. But to make them so it is necessary to endow them with all the attributes of the infinite God, whose place of authority in the universe they are supposed to

occupy. Their reign is universal and eternal. Their intelligence is so perfect that they work with definite design and development toward ends moral and spiritual that are far beyond the power of the human mind to comprehend or imagine. This wonderful system of laws is affected by no sickly sentiment toward the individual. It is in the interest of the highest good of the universe as a whole that they work. This is the beneficent end toward which through infinite ages they are progressing.

Sometimes the "forces of nature" are represented as sufficient to account for the world and its progress, and they, too, have all the attributes of an infinite Mind. They are eternal, and, far back in the morning of all existence, back so far that one's mind reels in its efforts to imagine, these mighty forces began the work of evolving this beautiful world of ours and the countless suns and systems that compose the stellar world, all from the lifeless fire-dust which

then filled the boundless ocean of space. For numberless ages these wonderful forces have been faithfully working wisely and beneficently toward ends that would do credit to infinite Intelligence. All that these forces require is plenty of time. Give them infinite ages in which to work out their designs, and they are equal to any task.

But what do these terms "natural laws" and "natural forces" mean? A little thought-analysis will show that these laws and forces are not self-existing and self-acting and self-directing at all.

Laws never do anything, and natural laws are no exception. They tell us the way in which forces act, and the regularity of their procedure. Civil laws do nothing. It is the civil officer who acts, and the law is the course which he is to take as an officer, and the course which, as an officer, he is expected to cause all citizens to observe. Civil laws are therefore only the methods

of civil and social order. The same is true of laws in nature. They are methods of order in nature, and define the course of acting, natural forces.

But what of natural forces? Are they not self-existing and self-acting? Or are they also blind, impersonal things without intelligence or wisdom or goodness? If the latter were true we should be no nearer the truth than we should be in attributing the world and its progress to simply natural laws. Natural forces is only a convenient phrase of the man of science, and is generally used without a thought of what it signifies. The truth is that this is only a name for something else. There can be no such thing as force independent of personality, either finite or infinite, and the final fact of all science and philosophy and theology and revelation is that, instead of there being many forces which we are wont to call natural and impersonal, there is but one force, and that is spiritual and personal. The

forces of nature are nothing else than the immanent God. The force that drives the planets in their course, the force that holds us to the earth and holds the earth together, the force that keeps the minutest particle of matter intact and gives it identity, the force that drives the locomotive and propels the wheels of factories and commerce, the force that carries the message so mysteriously along the wire and across the sea, the force that flashes so instantaneously from other planets to our own across multiplied millions of miles, the force that bears up the clouds and sends down the shower, the force that bursts the shell and sprouts the seed, that develops the plant and the tree and paints the beauties of the flower and the fruit, every force of the world and the universe, except that of man and whatever other finite beings there may be, is the activity of the infinite God; and the law of the force's activity is nothing else than the immutable course of



divine wisdom in giving to the world order and system.

It is God then who reigns, instead of laws and forces. He is so intimately identified with the world, and the world is so dependent upon him, that should he for one moment cease to act, all things but himself would cease to be. His continual activity in the material world is so essential to its existence, that his active presence amounts to a continuous creation. But whether finite personalities are by nature so persistent as to continue to exist eternally, without moral and vital union with the infinite Source of life, is a question of philosophic speculation and Biblical interpretation on which the greatest minds and best hearts of the world differ. For the final answer to this solemn question we shall have to wait. We are at present concerned with the mysteries of this world under the reign of infinite Beneficence.

If, then, we are to think of the infinitely

wise and good God, instead of natural forces working in the world, do we not indict him for all the death and devastation that follow in the path of these forces when they are awake and mad with fury? Tornadoes and earthquakes and floods and conflagrations and wrecks and thunderbolts are instances of the violence of these natural forces, which also play havoc in ten thousand other ways all over the world. Are we to think, then, that instead of natural forces, it is God who is doing all this? The question is reasonable and to the point. We answer in the affirmative, but ask the patience and careful consideration of the reader before he allows his nature to revolt at the thought.

The fact is, this world is composed of two hemispheres, the bright and the dark. We like to think of and live in the bright side of life, but we are all forced to feel and see the dark side also, and it is this that gives us trouble and despair. We can

not get rid of the darkness, nor can we get rid of the thought that some one is responsible for it. But when we say that God reigns in this world, we do not indict him for any of its evils. He reigns, but his throne is white. His government is beneficent.

Much of the horror which we feel on account of accidents and catastrophies is due to circumstances. The farther they are removed from us in time and place and personal significance, the less distressing are they to us. The burning and burying of Pompeii by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in the year 79 shocks us less than the ruin of the city of St. Pierre by the eruption of Mt. Pelee nineteen centuries later. The drowning of thousands in China by the overflow of a river impresses us less deeply than the Johnstown or Galveston horror in our own land. The death of multitudes in a single disaster is more horrifying than the death of many times that number, if

they take place by individuals in as many different places and from different causes. Death from accident seems worse than death from a lingering disease. And when our loved ones are taken from us our hearts are broken, though the death of a stranger is little more than a passing event.

But aside from the extreme horror that we feel on account of circumstances attending the calamities of the world, the fact still remains that all men are sufferers in some way or another, and none are exempt from that final separation that breaks all the ties that bind us to this world and to those we so much love. The whole problem then reduced to its simplest form is this: Why should God so govern the world and so deal with men as to cause any one ever to suffer or die? The question is a reasonable one, but it can not be answered in a few words.

Only two kinds of worlds are conceivable. One is the world that we have—a

world of order and system, created and governed by a presiding Mind. The other is an impossible world that is created in the human imagination, a world all topsy-turvy, harum-scarum. But if this were a topsy-turvy world: if to-day a given body weighed three or four times as much as it did yesterday, if we never could tell whether an unsupported body would fall to the ground or ascend into the air, if to-day the temperature should be one hundred degrees and to-morrow forty degrees below zero, if at one time a certain vegetable were food and at another time poison, if the normal temperature of the human body varied with the changes in atmospheric temperature, if one day were ten hours long and another fifteen and another twenty-five, if seasons did not come and go in any fixed routine, if, in short, we could never be sure of anything, our lives and even our mental and moral powers would be overthrown. We therefore need and must have a world



in which there is a fixed order and one upon which we can with confidence depend. Hence God acts uniformly in the world for our highest good. His ways of working are laws of life for us, though they may and often do occasion suffering and death. But if we stand across the path which his wisdom and goodness take in working out for us our highest good, the consequence should not be charged to the sovereign severity of God.

It seems then both reasonable and right that a fixed and reliable order should be maintained in this world, and that immunity from suffering and death should not be expected either as a reward for great piety and devotion, or because of God's compassion toward human ignorance and weakness or childish innocence and mistakes.

If we are to pass judgment on what God does with us and for us, we must keep in mind his evident purpose in all that he does. And if we should think there is a

better way than his, we must test it also by the effect it would have upon us.

If in our judgment only the wicked and vicious should suffer and the devout and virtuous be exempt, we should not forget that there are numberless degrees of character in the descending scale from the best to the worst, and that each of us is judged in a different light by every other man. The same is true of the degree of strength and of knowledge that one may have. If, then, God should grant immunity from suffering according to the degree of merit that each man possesses, it is easy to see that the effect upon all would be confusing and demoralizing. There would be no established order in the course of nature, and nothing could be depended upon with the assurance of safety. Such would be the effect upon us of any way than that which is. God's way is the best and only possible way. Any other would end in confusion and disaster to mental and moral life.

God reigns. It is not impersonal, powerless natural laws, or blind, irresponsible natural forces that reign. Neither is it a demon or any number of demons who reign either absolutely or as God's rivals. God alone reigns. The evils for which we hold some superior evil power responsible are not all such. The amount of evil that actually exists in the world varies with the larger or the more limited views that men take of the world and life and duty and God and destiny. The small soul who thinks and lives for himself alone, deals with the devil continually, and sees his mischief in everything and everybody. He thinks of the devil more than he does of God, and sees God's hand less in the affairs of men than he does the strong arm of a rival power. It is quite different with the man who is godlike, unselfish, and devout. The devil is of little importance to him personally; he holds no important place in his creed, and in no

sense does he reign as God's rival in the world. But he thinks of God, holds fellowship with him, and rejoices to recognize his reign over the whole earth, through his entire universe and from age to age, eternally. The man who has the larger vision sees things more in God's light and recognizes the beneficence of his government more fully. He does not make the common mistake of limiting God's government to the physical world, and his purpose to the progress of the order of nature. He sees that the supreme purpose of God and the end toward which he is working in all things is a moral one. Viewing the world as moral, even in the physical realm, most of its mysteries that are of a moral nature are dissolved, and beneficence completely floods the mind's horizon with its consolation and holy light.

God reigns, and his throne is white. It is never, never usurped by an evil power or abdicated for his misuse. Upon it there

is no stain of cruelty or injustice or unkindness. No weakness or indifference or partiality is conceivable in his sovereignty. His scepter never trembles. In wisdom and righteousness and strength, boundless and everlasting, he reigns King of kings and Lord of lords.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DIVINE PURPOSE.

It is not unreasonable to think that God governs this world chiefly in the interest of the moral or spiritual, rather than the physical or natural order. It is reasonable to believe that he prizes virtue, holiness, love, intelligence, courage, freedom, and the like more highly than he does the characteristics of natural objects; that men who can think his thoughts after him, respond to the heart-throbs of eternal love and pity, and follow the devious path that leads through darkness upward to the light are by him esteemed more highly than mountains, though they be filled with treasures of gold; that nations are worth more to him than continents; and the moral universe than suns and systems without number.



Even in the realm of physical facts this is more a moral than it is a material world. Creation was a moral act of God bringing into existence an arena for the activities of moral beings, to whom life would be sweet and achievement a delight. The maintenance of the world is likewise a moral process with a moral end in view. In the realization of this end the one changeless fact is the moral purpose of God. This is as certainly unalterable as his moral nature. In the realization of his purpose he makes the natural order a means; and, while his purpose never varies, his method of working it out may and does change. As nature is only a method, so far as we can see, and not an end, there have been variations from a fixed order for the purpose of realizing higher ends than can be realized in a material system.

Variations in the natural order are necessary for the accomplishment of God's purpose, which is the perfection of moral

beings and ultimately a moral world. But these variations are only exceptions in a fixed natural order, and not the order itself. Both the variations and the established order are necessary for the development of a moral world and the fulfillment of God's righteous will.

The security of life, as well as the balance of our reason and our moral nature, require stability in the order of the world. We are so closely bound to nature and so dependent upon it, that its course must be sufficiently regular and wholly reliable. Its laws must be, as they are, laws of life to us. But should there never be any variation from a fixed, inflexible order in nature, the purpose of God in perfecting in us our higher, moral nature would be defeated. The requirements of our bodies are so immediate, so imperative, and so numerous, that it is necessary for our good that there should be windows through the hard, dark wall of inexorable law and un-

sympathizing nature to let in light from the spiritual world. For were it not for such light from above we would think that nature is all, that we are of the earth ourselves, that our duty is to nature alone, and that when it affords no light we must walk in darkness, and when it gives no consolation we must in sorrow bow to our fate.

It is therefore for our highest good that God does at times do things in a way different from the ordinary course which we see in nature. These variations in his method of working are what we call miracles. As an illustration, if we saw all the water in one of the great lakes suddenly rise from its basin in one vast volume and thus be lifted to the clouds, we should call it the most impressive miracle the world has ever known. But the miraculousness of it would be in its variation from the ordinary; for, in fact, that much water is raised to the clouds every day by the natural method of evaporation. Were one

way as common as the other, we should probably think the latter method of evaporation the most remarkable and mysterious, as it would be. The method which was the greatest break in the course of natural law, we should call the miraculous.

But with God there is no such thing as a miracle. That which is changeless is his moral purpose, and both the ordinary, which we call natural, and the extraordinary, which we call supernatural, are methods by which he works his beneficent will, and only methods. All the time he is acting on the high moral plane of directing the thoughts of men to himself, whom they should adoringly fear and lovingly obey for the good it will be to them. When he wishes to declare the authority of a prophet or an apostle as a messenger of truth to the world and to all ages, he does through him, or, in the presence of witnesses, does something himself, which shall stand out as a great historic fact. But should these

wonders become common daily happenings, the purpose of God to awaken and perfect the moral natures of men would be defeated as certainly as it would be if they never occurred at all.

This truth sheds light on the dark problems of the world and life. We wonder why God does not more frequently interpose and avert disaster, dispel darkness, and relieve suffering. But, if any, why not all? And if all, would his moral purpose be realized in us and in the world? If when the seas are swept by storms that imperil the lives of voyagers, every captain of an ocean liner were given power to stand on deck, and, stretching forth his hand, speak to the tempest, "Peace, be still," and it should obey him as the storm on Galilee obeyed the Master; if God should feed the famine-stricken districts of Asia with manna as he did the Israelites in the wilderness; if in answer to prayer an approaching cyclone should be turned back

or be lifted to spare a city, and then sweep on in its destructive course; if the pious and the innocent alone were made invulnerable to the thunderbolt; if at will any one, following his heart of sympathy, might open the eyes of the blind, cause the lame to walk, or raise sufferers from their sick-beds to comfort and health; if when our loved ones die we could take some sympathizing friend with us to where they lay who should be able with a word to call them forth and restore them to us alive, loving, and true; if by a word, a stroke of the hand, a prayer, or by gifts or sacrifices however costly we could realize all our fond desires for ourselves or for others, would the world be better off than it is? Surely not. Instead of order we should have confusion. Instead of a God whom we could trust, we should have one whom we could not regard. Instead of being impressed by the divine interposition, we should be as insensible and irreverent as



rocks. Instead of God's purpose being realized in us, it would end in failure. What we need is sufficient light shining into our dark abode to inspire us all with the sweeter, purer light of heaven, and that much is given. If we had more it would be no better to us than the shining of the sun or the pale, still light of the moon.

Again, since the happiness and hope of the world depend so much upon our having a full knowledge of great, fundamental truths, children that we are, we do not see why God does not use his authority in giving to all the world a full-orbed knowledge of all that we need to know. If wisdom and goodness were not his attributes also, it would not be hard to see that by his almightiness he could give to all nations just such a revelation. He could make every cloud his Shekinah by day and by night. He could write his law in letters of fire upon the curtain of the sky. He could cause every thunderbolt to articulate his

righteous wrath against all iniquity. He could inscribe upon every leaf of forest and field his message of mercy to the meek and lowly of heart. He could make every gentle breeze whisper in our ears his fatherly love for all his children. He could startle every sinner from his lethargy and stop him in his course of self-destruction by writing upon the wall of his house of feasting and debauchery and shame, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." He could give to the waves that ever beat upon the sands and rocks of an endless shore the voice that tells of immortality, and cause the rolling ocean to respond with the solemn significance of eternity. He could raise up prophets and send them to all people and tongues, giving them as their divine credentials the power to do miracles and mighty works. The possibilities of God's almightiness to give to the whole world a perfect revelation certainly are without limit.

But with such a revelation, full and universal, would the world be any better off than it is? So it may seem to some. Instead of having the many existing forms of false and conflicting religions, we should have had from the first the one true religion, and the worship of the one and only true God. We never should have had the true religion rent by doctrinal controversies, as it has been. Holy wars, persecutions, inquisitorial tribunals, intolerance, strife, and enmity would have been unknown in history, because the light of divine truth had shone always everywhere. We should have been free from all modern religious fads and heresies. The age-long conflicts of science and religion, and of Christianity and free thought would have been impossible, because nature and revelation would have been manifestly harmonious and evidently of one origin, and that divine. Atheism would have been a thing unknown, for God's existence would

have been a self-evident fact to every mind and clear as a sunbeam. Agnosticism would have been equally impossible, for the knowledge of him and all fundamental truth would have been as certain as the consciousness of one's own existence. There would have been no place for naturalism, because all effects in nature would have been directly traceable to the one great Cause of all things. Positivism never would have had a name, for knowledge would have been so direct that the truth would not have been a tax either on one's logic in proving it, or on one's faith in believing it. Our origin, duty, and destiny would have been so revealed that there could have remained no room for doubt or misgiving or fear or despair. But such a revelation as this God has not given. And yet the wish that it had been made is implied in all our childish impatience with Providence.

The desire that we have to know the mysteries of the world and to have the highest good realized in all men is a divine trait in us, instead of a reflection upon our great heartedness and love of humanity. But how utterly fatal to the divine purpose for the world would our wishes be, were they substituted for the method which God pursues in the world!

Should the extraordinary become continuous, should the supernatural become common, it would be no more impressive than nature alone would be. In fact, the natural and the supernatural would be to us identical. If the revelation were made as universal and inflexible as nature, the world would be reduced to an order in which there would, after all, be no supernatural element. And if, on the other hand, the revelation were universal, but subject to no order or system, we should have a world of disorder which would wreck all reason as well as faith. In either

case the divine purpose to awaken and develop the moral life of the world by impressions from the spiritual world would fail.

Another fact must not be overlooked. Man is not a mechanism. He does not receive truth passively, then give it forth in the form of character and influence, as the water receives the sunlight, then reflects it back toward its source. However, there is something more the matter with the world than the need of greater knowledge, unless it be that knowledge which is equivalent to wisdom, in which there is a due regard for moral excellence. Hence, were it morally possible for God to give to all mankind a clear revelation of himself, a full knowledge of their divine obligations, a definite code of social ethics and standards of national and world righteousness, there would still be lacking the necessary moral impulse and love of true godliness to raise the truth thus revealed into the living form



of personal excellence. Infinite wisdom has given to the world all the light it has needed. Not all the light that perfect knowledge calls for, but all that perfect moral development requires, and this is God's purpose concerning us, and our supreme need.

A revelation, even though it were as universal as nature itself, would therefore not take out of the world its cruelty and crime, its intolerance and ignorance, its doubt and despair. The spread of Gospel light in the Christian nations did not put an end to wars and persecutions and intolerance. It did not settle the controversies of creeds and put an end to all heresy. The world was morally wrong, and when the right goes forth in a world of wrong there will be war and suffering until righteousness, which has the right of way, is triumphant everywhere. Contradictory as it may seem, the Prince of Peace came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword. But

peace will come to earth when good-will to men becomes a universal practice in the world. That is, when the moral purpose of God is realized.

Disbelief has ever been due to disposition, far more than to the need of greater light. Men are atheists, agnostics, materialists, anything and everything in Christian lands, with open Bible in hand and with evidences on every side of God's presence and power in the world.

The cure of disbelief and doubt, and their consequent suffering and despair, is an honest attitude of will and affection toward the truth that God has given, and toward himself as the infinite power in the world who works for righteousness.

Nor has God shown favoritism, in that he has withheld the higher forms of revelation from some nations and given it to others, and in making it more clear in these Christian centuries than he did in the morning centuries of history. Excessive light

would have been blinding rather than illuminating to ages and nations in great darkness. The moral life of the world, the same as of the individual, is a development. As the moral life unfolds, the apprehension of the truth revealed becomes more clear. Then the higher and more spiritual forms of revelation are imparted. The form and the degree that the revelation takes are always justified by the end that God has in view for the world and the capacity of the world at any given time to understand what he would make known to it. But if all the world has not and never did have the sacred Scriptures, this does not mean that any part of the world has ever been abandoned by God to utter darkness and hopelessness. The fact that in every age all nations have had some form of religious worship, though it may be most degrading homage paid to incarnations of passion and vice, and the fact also that these nations have ever felt after God, if happily

they might find him, is reasonable evidence that his Spirit has ever been in the world brooding over this human chaos for the purpose of perfecting its moral life.

Again, where much is given to any people, from them much is required. Developed moral life is truth in personal form, and when any people under the care of God have had their moral life so unfolded as to embody in their national and social and industrial and personal life the high standards of God's revealed truth, he holds them responsible for the greater enlightenment of uncivilized nations. Thus it is that, through people in whom his purpose is at least partly realized, and not by rocks and winds and trees and inscriptions on the sky or anything wholly of the impersonal order, does he make known his will to benighted peoples.

By this method, as by no other, is the feeling of responsibility and sympathy and sacrifice upon the part of the strong toward

the weak enlarged, and the sense of gratitude and love and confidence in the weak toward the strong developed, both of which are essential to and largely constitute the moral life of the world as it is purposed by God. Without the inequality of nations the divine attributes of international sympathy and sacrifice, fraternity and philanthropy would have no incentive. The same is true for all Christian communions, as well as for every individual who has a truth which would be a benefit for others to know.

And so beneficent is God's method of revelation, that it is not the one who receives that is most blest. Every act of sacrifice or suffering for others has its reflex effect upon the doer of it, so that he also is lifted into richer experience and clearer light. How true is the saying of the master Teacher, "He that would save his life shall lose it, and he that would lose his life shall keep it." It applies to nations, to Christian communions, and to all individuals,

and its truth is verified with never an exception.

Defective as God's method of revelation may seem to some, it is nevertheless infinitely wise and good, and the only possible one for a world that has a moral life to unfold. The world's darkness is dissolving slowly, too slowly for our impatience. But if men are morally responsible, they are to have a part in their own development, and upon this fact hangs the age-long delay in the world's march to its divinely-appointed goal. God's purpose is holy. This he changes not; but both the natural and the supernatural orders are his variable methods, and as such, are both subservient to the changeless law of his moral purpose, which is the one absolute, eternal order.

Subject to this higher order is also the balance between the natural and the supernatural methods. When the moral good of the world calls for it, the natural order



may be broken more frequently by manifestations of God in the supernatural form. Upon the other hand, should the good of the world require it, the natural may remain even more fixed and the supernatural become less frequent. If, as seems to have been the case, there have been ages in which the supernatural in the form of miracle and prophecy was more frequent than at present, it is because the moral life of the world, the faith of men in God, and the co-operation of men with God have become so established that the methods of revelation in former centuries are no longer needed as they then were. For more miraculous than miracle and more prophetic than prophecy is the life of God in men. The truth then becomes personal and incarnate, and these sons of God are the epistles that are read and known of men with more fruitful results. Better and far more convincing of the truth of God than multiplied miracles are multitudes of men who are morally great, and in their hearts of

sympathy and works of mercy embrace all men the world over.

These facts of miracle and prophecy as methods of God in working out his holy will in the world point to another fact which is infinitely more significant than any other for the world's hope and happiness; namely, the incarnation of the Son of God. Here is the miracle that is greater than all other miracles, for he is the most unaccountable fact in all history from the standpoint of one who would account for him as he may account for other men. For other men, no matter how high they may rise above their age, can be accounted for by antecedent forces and surrounding influences. They may be great enough to be called remarkable men, and go down as historic characters. But Christ can not be accounted for as other men are. For, while he rose infinitely above his own age and could not have been the product of a race of antecedents, he is so superior to other men that he rises far above any who have

appeared in the world since his time. So pure, so universal, so great is he, that he is the human type for all ages and nations, and the prophecy in person of the perfected purpose of God for humanity. He is a complete break in the series of natural causes. He appears in the world through the veil of nature; still he is not of natural origin. So far superior is he to nature, that it yields to his word and touch as though it recognized in him its rightful Lord.

Christ is the most unaccountable historic fact known to men. He has arrested the thought of the world and captivated its heart more effectually than all other facts. He is a miracle even in the sphere of the miraculous, a supernatural fact in the course of supernatural events. His mission to the world was to reveal not only God to men, but to reveal men to themselves, and to point all men to what they are capable of being by God's purpose concerning them becoming realized.

The Incarnation is therefore not an end in itself, but is the supreme act of God in his method of working out his will in men and the world. Of all facts that rise above nature into the class of the supernatural, the most impressive is the presence of the Son of God in the world, partaking of human flesh and blood, but living a life, revealing a character, setting in motion moral forces, and teaching truths fundamental for all ages and nations. He came into the world in the fullness of time, when the world was ready for him, and he went out of the world when he did, because he knew it was expedient for him to go. One Christ is all that the world has had, and all that it ever shall need. Upon him, through the Spirit's universal influence, the minds of men will ever be fixed, and the better he is known and trusted, the more will the wrongs of the world be righted, the hearts of men be purified, and their lives glorified. Never will his moral magnetism diminish or his light grow dim.

Christ came into the world to do the will of his Father who sent him, and, having finished the work that he gave him to do, he disappeared from the sight of men, that through the Spirit he might become a universal Christ and remain with us always, even unto the end of the world.

What shall we say then? Are not God's thoughts and ways as high as the heavens above our thoughts and our ways? His purpose is infinitely wise and good, and his method of working it out through miracle, prophecy, the Incarnation, the Spirit's inspiration, and providence is likewise divinely beneficent.

Darkness is not all dissolved, suffering is not all alleviated, tears are not all wiped away, wrong is not all righted, his ways are not all known; but the moral world is only in the formative period yet. The perfect has not yet been realized. But it is God's plan that it shall be. Through all the variations that come in the course of

history and the process of nature, as well as in the more permanent order, where, as a rule, events come to pass according to fixed law, the one factor universal and eternal is God's moral law. From it there is never a shadow of turning. It is his unalterable method of achieving his final purpose in the world.

There is divine moral purpose in every event, every fact, every experience, everything. The patient, truth-seeking soul will try to trace this purpose in all the onward movements of the world. He will not hastily conclude from this or that fact what that purpose is, much less will he doubt such a purpose because of mystery or calamity or suffering. If he can not understand, he nevertheless will believe that God is good and wise, and to him this is better than sight; it is the substance of the things for which he hopes, the evidence of things which otherwise can not be known.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE RACE UNDER DISCIPLINE.

THE wretchedness of the race through all the centuries of its slow progress to its present state of peace, enlightenment, and righteousness has caused many to doubt even a race providence, not to mention a divine care for the individual.

It must be confessed that the history of the world is a sad, dark story viewed in the light of the physical and moral misery which the race has borne in its desperate, blind struggle toward civilization. But there is no ground for indicting God as the cause of it. His reign over the earth and in all human affairs has ever been beneficent, wise, and just. His throne has been stainless and white. If the race, like a current of water, flowed on in a prescribed

course guided by external forces which were sufficient to explain all its movements and varied conditions, then there might be some possible ground for charging the world's woes to faults and failures in God's government; he could have made human existence brighter and better, but did not. But if man was to be what he is, and not something so passive, impressionless, and irresponsible as to be a different order of being altogether, then no course of providence is conceivable which would have hastened the race with greater speed and certainty toward its appointed goal.

Man was made for action and achievement, and the earth an arena for his valor. If, then, the race has found the world to contain more mystery than plain truth, it does not follow that God is jealous of knowledge in his creatures. If there were given to man heavy burdens to bear, and a long, hard journey to travel over an unknown and devious path, this does not mean

that existence begins and ends with toil, or that there is no compensation at last for his weariness and burden-bearing. And if there has been bleeding and suffering in all ages, the conclusion is not that the God who is over all and blessed forever is a disinterested observer of all this terrible strife, or that he looks upon the agony of the world with no heart of pity and no hand of help.

We are to think of the race which is, and not an imaginary one; a race which, though very imperfect, is capable, through discipline, of development to a state of perfection which far transcends our utmost present conception; and for such a purpose this is the best possible world, and God's method of instruction and discipline is the best, no doubt, that infinite wisdom and goodness could devise; certainly better than human ingenuity could plan.

It is quite true that for aught we know the material world and the course of nature

may serve even a higher purpose than being a field for human valor and achievement. We do not know what significance it may have for the Creator himself, beyond the purpose it may serve the human race. It may possibly be of more service to man after he has passed beyond the shadows of earth and time and joined the innumerable company of immortals, than it was while he made it his home and school for mental and moral discipline. For the material universe certainly contains mysteries deep enough and numerous to tax the minds of loftier spirits and more divine than can be attributed to human souls in this world, however perfect they may be in mental grasp and spiritual insight, and it may serve such beings as its chief end. But such ideas can be only conjectural. We are not in a position to see that nature serves any purpose higher than being an arena for man's discipline and development while he is living in this world.

And it certainly has served this purpose well. For, whichever view one may hold as to man's primitive state, whether that of a high degree of intelligence, clear understanding of social rights and duties, lofty ideals, pure morals, spiritual perception, or that of an undeveloped savage; whether he be regarded as allied to his Creator or to the beast of the field, we certainly find that, from the beginning of reliable history to the present, there has been a race progress upward and away from the selfish and the animal toward the social and the moral life. The world was new and the race was young, just the kind of a world that the young race needed. There were unsailed seas, unexplored continents, undiscovered resources, unknown laws, unseen forces, undeveloped principles, and unclassified facts. The task of turning the desert world into a thing of service and beauty was given to man. But had his wants all been so well supplied as to re-

quire no effort upon his part to obtain them; had he from the beginning been made free from drudgery and disease and suffering and death; had the world been a thing so small and so simple as to call forth no activity and require no courage; had he been made so perfect in his mental and moral nature as to find no mysteries in the world to master, no secrets to solve, and no trials to test him; had his social nature been fully developed so that each man knew and owned every other man as his brother and felt himself to be his keeper; had he freely acquiesced in governments and laws and language and science and philosophy and religion and all forms of truth given to him perfected by God at the beginning; had his own nature been fully developed and he able fully to understand the world of mystery that is in his own soul, what would have been the result? Evidently this: The race would



have died in infancy, and the earth would have remained a waste place unto this day.

It is not hard to recognize a race providence, while we think only of the agreeable things and the visible hand of God in the world. We can all easily believe and be optimistic in our faith while we look only on the bright side of the world's life. It is when the darkness overtakes us that we are seized with despair and doubt. It is when we reflect upon the groveling, groping, wretchedness, and helplessness of the race and of "man's inhumanity to man" that we wonder where God is and what interest he has in the world's happiness and progress. There is a "soul of goodness in things evil," but it is not always manifest, and when for the want of a true faith and a clear spiritual insight we are unable to see it, we seize upon the "things evil," and then our sense of what is right and just leads us to question a beneficence in the world-order. Nevertheless there is a

world-providence even in the things which seem to be incompatible with a beneficent and faultless moral government among men.

The physical features of the earth show plainly that God intended it, not as a pleasure ground for men, but as a place of discipline. Some men are so extremely utilitarian that they can see no good reason why such a large part of the earth's surface should be composed of vast regions of snow and ice, broad ocean wastes, storm-swept, dreary deserts, and rock-ribbed mountains. But these have been the natural boundaries and bulwarks for the nations through all the centuries. For this reason they have served a beneficent purpose in protecting the race from its own suicidal hand. For, had it not been for these natural barriers which made the transportation or march of armies from one country to another difficult, if not in many instances impossible, those nations

which have given to the world the richest treasures of art, language, culture, and religion, and some of the highest ideals of national and domestic life, would have been exterminated in their infancy. Moreover, it seems that God kept the richest continents a secret from the race by these vast wastes of water and sand and ice, and reserved them until he had trained peoples who were courageous and worthy enough to go over and possess them, and there raise the ensign of freedom and protection for the downtrodden multitudes of earth. To some it may seem that fertile plains, stately forests, rivers of oil, mountains of minerals, and hills of granite and marble would have served the world far better than these vast uninhabitable and unproductive areas. But such a view is too narrow to commend itself to the thoughtful. God has abundantly provided the race with all these things, and they serve, as far as they are capable of serving, the purpose of

God in training the race in righteousness and helping it to a happy existence.

But it is not in great riches and resources that any age or people is strong and great. The world's richest treasures are its moral and intellectual fiber and productiveness. If then these vast wastes have served the purpose of protecting the race from self-destruction; if in surmounting them it has been trained in character and courage; if they have created brain and brawn; if they have fostered freedom and faith; if the cities built by the seas have been beautified with the highest arts and the noblest architecture; if in these cities have been founded the schools in which the world's masters have developed and taught the systems of truth which have been the inspiration and the light of the ages; if conquering commerce and political greatness have followed the circle of the seas; if the greatest achievements in structural engineering have been the products

of nations hemmed in by natural barriers; if all this wealth has become the world's possession on account of the inspiration, protection, influence, and discipline of deserts and mountains and seas and zones of snow and ice, then who can say that the race has not been better cared for than it would have been with infinite resources of material wealth and physical comfort?

Those who are unable to see that the barrenness of so large a part of the earth's surface can serve any good end for the race, should remember that all those little imperial powers of thought and energy and faith, such as Palestine, Greece, Italy, Holland, Great Britain, and New England, where the world's heart has throbbed deepest, and the stream of divine life has flowed fastest and fullest, have been situated where lofty mountains, broad deserts, or rolling, restless seas have awakened thoughts of the infinite and have created courage in the race's struggle for exist-

ence. From this point of view they will see less occasion of finding fault with God's government and more clearly recognize his moral purpose in the training of the race.

Again, we are just beginning to see how exhaustless are the physical forces and material resources of the world, and the uses which they serve in uniting all people in ties of intelligence and fraternity, in lifting burdens from the backs of men and beasts, and in multiplying the comforts and unfolding the moral life of mankind. We are just in the early dawn of the last day of creation, the Sabbath of the world's rest. The forces and the resources of nature, which God garnered up ages upon ages ago for the future service and comfort of the race, are just beginning to relieve the weariness of toiling hands and tired feet. Relieved of many of their heavy physical burdens, men are beginning to have strength and time for other and higher tasks. They may now give attention to the



culture of mind and heart. They may develop their ethical and social lives and add to their domestic and religious joys.

Nature is certainly a rich storehouse of treasures and forces and laws for the benefit of the race, but why were its doors for so many ages shut and its contents kept a profound secret? Why should man have to till the soil with a stick or stone until a few generations ago, while the very dirt in which he dug contained iron for implements that would have made his toil lighter and his harvest more abundant? Why was he so long ignorant of the use of coal to drive the wheels of commerce and manufacturing, and these great world industries be so long retarded on account of it? Why was the use of steam, one of the mightiest forces in nature, a thing unknown to the race until recently, though its presence in the world has for ages been a matter of common knowledge? Electricity has ever offered its services to lift the burdens from

man and beast and bless the world with its language and light, but strangely enough the ages have stupidly feared its voice and known not its good-will. And why should disease and suffering ravage the race so long, while remedies for the relief of so many human ills abounded everywhere?

The blessings of providence that have been stored up in this old time-worn earth and have long waited and still wait the world's service are numberless. But why was not the race made aware of the use of all these elements and powers that enter into the arts and sciences of civilized life long ages ago? Why did not the Hand that placed them here disclose their secret and put them to the service of a suffering, helpless world in its childhood? And if a better day is coming on, a day of universal sympathy and comfort and peace and brotherhood, because of a better knowledge of what God has done to bless mankind, why must millions still suffer and toil on

and die while the world continues to grope for greater light?

Such questions can reasonably be raised only as we imagine the earth to be filled with a race of beings other than men, or think of God as dealing so arbitrarily with men as utterly to ignore what they really are and treating them as though they were things instead. If the race were composed of beings who could have no appreciation of providence, no sense of duty, no choice of right, no fear of penalty, no sense of responsibility, no aspiration for goodness, no power of reason, who, in short, are wholly incapable of development, then there would be some justification for finding fault with God's way of dealing with them. But such creatures would not be men.

Upon the other hand, if God could take men as they are and exalt them by his almighty power to such a state of perfection as would make them insensible to suffering,

and give them a clear knowledge of all facts and laws and duties and perfect their moral and social natures and give them composure of heart and rest of faith in his good providence and submission to his wholesome discipline, but did not do so, then we might again complain justly that he was not doing his best to improve the condition of his dependent children. But such a thing would be an impossibility even with almighty God. For, should he thus raise man arbitrarily to such a state of exaltation he would be destroying man and making a being of another order.

It is the race of beings which we call men that God is dealing with and disciplining, and for it he is working wisely, as best he can, to bring it to its appointed beneficent goal. The Spirit of God has ever brooded over the chaos of humanity, bringing light out of darkness, order out of confusion, good out of evil, and happiness out of sorrow and suffering; and he

will continue to co-operate with the struggling race as it strives to rise until his moral purpose for the world is fully realized. But in his guardianship over the world God has followed the course of discipline that has developed the race symmetrically. For it is with the race as it is with the individual; the method of instruction followed must recognize the capacity to receive and use the gifts of God, and the stages of instruction must progress from the lower to the higher.

Now, the goal of the world is a moral one, and the movement of the race as a whole has ever been toward that end. But such is the character of undeveloped humanity that it would have been fatal to have put it in possession of the wealth and forces and privileges of modern civilization before men and nations became sufficiently rational and moral to use them judiciously. Had barbarous ages been put in possession of modern means of trans-

portation and modern instruments of warfare, had they known the chemistry of explosives and the varied uses of electricity, had they been familiar with the geography of the earth and the languages of hostile tribes, the slaughter of savage and semi-civilized nations would have been well-nigh complete, and the world's progress would have been retarded. There would have been vastly more suffering than there has been from the plan and the program of providence for the world.

No good has God ever denied the world when the fullness of time had come for the world to receive and enjoy it; for no blessing, however great, is ever fit for man's use until man is fit to use it. The knowledge of great truths, the use of great forces, the service of great riches, all come in the course of human progress and constitute progress, though strangely enough about every great discovery or idea or reform has had its crucified lord. Who then



can justify any objection to the way God has withheld from former ages any of the blessings which this age of civilization enjoys?

Another thing which looks like divine indifference concerning the good of the race, is the small degree of knowledge which the present age possesses of the people and civilization of the early centuries of the world's history. If each age is rightful heir to all the good of the ages that went before it, why did not the great Teacher and Benefactor of the world preserve for coming generations all the arts and literature and laws and customs and religious light of the pioneer peoples of the world that are now dead and forgotten? Why have they not signified more for the world of to-day? Did God care so little for the latter ages as not to preserve for them the early records of the race, or did he consider the achievements of the ages of oblivion to be of so little consequence

for the future? By excavating the buried ruins of ancient cities, desecrating the tombs of dead nations, deciphering hieroglyphics, translating scraps of time-worn parchment, crediting truth to the traditions and legends and myths that have been handed down from generation to generation, digging up old coins and broken columns, and making all that we can of every chance discovery that bears the marks of antiquity, we have found that the nations now lost to reliable history are by no means to be despised for what they achieved.

But even if what they did achieve signified but little in comparison with the marvels of the present century, it is of interest to us that we know something more definite than we do of the first scenes and actors of the age-long drama of man. It seems right, too, that we should know who our early benefactors were, that we may better revere their memory. But they are dead, and what they did is buried with

them. Why has God so dealt with the race? The only true answer is that he has done so for the training and perfecting of a race of intelligent moral beings.

In the first place, truth is not of human origin. All truth is eternal, and when it becomes a matter of human knowledge it is either from discovery or revelation, or both; and when it becomes known, it remains forever the world's possession. It may be handed down from age to age and pass from nation to nation, and in its course take on new forms, but the substance of it never dies or disappears from the world. It is ever appearing and reappearing in a new light, and often in such a changed appearance as to be identified with difficulty. And yet it is the same time-honored truth. In his education of the race God does not burden men with non-essentials, the minor details and forms of truth, but inspires them with the essentials, the fundamentals, the living realities.

Truth has life, and whatever the ancient world may have known of it still lives. It survives customs, language, literature, religion, caste, tribal characteristics, storms of revolution, and the death of nations. It is heaven-born, and in an upper current passes along from age to age.

It is not possible for us to analyze the infinitely complex stream of truth that courses through and constitutes our present civilization. No man is able to tell when and by whom one-thousandth part of the truth which he may know came to be the world's possession. That is a matter of little consequence to him. To know that he knows it, without knowing its history, is enough. Much less is it possible to trace all the world's truth back to where it was born from above. This is not necessary for our happiness and progress. For this reason God has buried the dead past, but given a resurrection unto life of the soul

of ancient civilization and culture, and the soul of it is our heritage to-day.

Comparatively little has God given to man ready for his use and easy of access, but he has done for him what is infinitely more for his good. He has placed him in a world where facts are sown broadcast, where forces clash, where struggle for existence is the law of life, where truth is but partly revealed, where only the still small voice of the Creator is heard, where all conceivable mysteries about the past and all degrees of uncertainty about the future exist, where want and grief and suffering and death abound, where everything is changing and transitory, where all conceivable forms of religion and caste and superstition abound along with race prejudice and varied degrees of national morality and enlightenment. He has placed him in this kind of a world for a good and wise purpose, and that purpose has been in process of realization through all the ages.

These are the things that have awakened the curiosity of mankind, invited investigation, challenged endeavor, tested endurance, developed brawn and brain, humbled pride, purified life, established faith, cultivated philanthropy, and united the race ever more in the firmer bonds of peace and good-will.

It is not luxury and laxity of discipline that have advanced the race. It is the obstacles in the way of progress and life and happiness that defy, and for the most part defeat, that have disciplined the race and have made man the master that he is.

Governments, laws, industrial society, social life, international comity, the home, the family, the school, the Church, and all the institutions of Christian civilization exist to bless mankind, because both the necessity of them and the desire for them were implanted in human nature, and because God has ever worked in the race, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.



It does not look as though the entire course of history has been forward. It does not look as though the race as a whole has always aspired to the will of God. It does not look as though the inspiration of the Almighty has always given to man an understanding. Nor does it look as though the chastening hand of God has always had the effect of correcting the wrongs of the world, and showing man the way to light and peace.

And since the world's salvation is being worked out by the human and the divine in co-operation, the human element makes it very certain that what God has willed concerning man has not always been the thing realized. Human intervention has often modified the beneficent end of God's providence and training of the race; but it is impossible to tell to what extent this is true, because only the mind of the Infinite knows how unsearchable are the judgments of the Lord and how past finding out are

all his ways. Only he knows how much at one time and how little at other times the race has followed its own evil course. It appears that at times God has held in his hand absolutely the destiny of the race, and that at other times he has permitted it to become sick of its iniquity, alarmed at its own condition, penitent of its sins, worn and weary of its self-inflicted wretchedness, its self-imposed burdens, and its self-benighted state. But thus is God governing the world in the interest of men; and no word is needed to show that the race has made progress under his discipline.

The end is not yet. Nor is it in the near future. True it is that war is not the world's chief vocation, as it once was. Nations are no longer bent on each other's destruction. Freedom's holy light is streaming into the dark recesses of the earth. Nymphs and hobgoblins have been driven from forests and meadows and waters. Reason is routing superstition;

and religion, united with morality, is reigning more and more in the consciences of the nations. The laws of God are becoming the laws of the people. Brotherhood is binding together the ends of the earth. Philosophy and science and industry and literature and laws and civil government and social, state, and Church institutions are becoming allied with the truth of revelation, and the giant men of the great nations of earth are owning the Christ as Master and Lord.

But the will of God is not yet done in earth as it is done in heaven. There have been wars, revolutions, persecutions, black atrocities, foul injustice, enervating wealth, luxury, and laxity in morals, and history is likely to repeat itself. The world is entering upon an age of Christian enlightenment. The righteousness of almighty God has the right of way in the earth, but as it goes forth in a world of wrong its rights are sure to be

disputed. The Prince of Peace has come, but until earth is purged of evil and error his coming is to bring to the race not the peace of compromise, but the sword of conflict.

With the waking of the Walled Kingdom which has slept for forty centuries there is coming to its teeming millions of people the realization of their peril and their power. They see dangers that threaten to dismember their kingdom, destroy their ancient shrines, desecrate the tombs of their sacred ancestors, set at naught their age-long customs, controvert their forms of faith, and disregard their ways of worship. China does not yet know her latent power and her large resources, but when she is wholly awake to her situation and her strength she will be something more than a field of strife between foreign powers; she will resist all invasion with millions of arms.

But the eyes of the world are on the

East. The Eastern Question, in which the interests of the nations of the earth, as well as the religions of all mankind, are involved, is the greatest that has ever come to the race as a whole for solution. It is to be hoped that it will be settled peaceably and justly, but that is too much to expect. It is more probable that its history when written will be one of the most terrible chapters in the annals of the world. Nations in which Christianity has given tone to diplomacy and temper to methods of warfare may do much to mitigate the avarice and atrocity of the conflict, but more than half the world know nothing of Christian ideals, and most of the other half regard them from policy more than from principle.

But the conflict seems inevitable, even necessary. It is one of God's ways of disciplining the race and teaching it wisdom. It gives himself greater authority in the affairs of nations and affords his truth an

opening for recognition. It forces nations to face each other with the best that they have of everything, moral, social, industrial, civil, and religious, and the Lord God of Hosts, who is over every battlefield, above each monarch's throne, in every council of peace, causes his truth to triumph, his name to be known.

Day is just dawning on the Dark Continent. A rim of light circles its horizon with a promise of the morning. Heralds of the Cross have brought the light that shall brighten ever until its age-long night is turned to eternal day. But what shall be the history of its civilization? So situated geographically as to be equally accessible to the nations of America, Europe, and Asia, Africa is destined to be the field of conflict for the great powers of three continents. Here again faith and superstition, justice and greed, truth and error, humanity and barbarism, the Author of life and the idols of death shall again come face to



face from the ends of the earth, and the epoch be one manifesting the might and the wisdom and the goodness of the Judge of all the earth. The nations shall see God and adore.

The human race believes both in God and in its high calling. This is the philosophy of its history and progress. The first article of the universal creed is the idea of God. It is universal because it belongs in human nature. It is not born of fear or dreams. Animals fear and evidently dream, but they know and feel and believe nothing of God, because there is not that within them that answers to the infinite Being who created them. But God has made man to know him and feel his presence in the world. The fact of God without and the idea of God within answer to each other. This realized relationship is the inspiration of the race and the spring of its progress. Where the conception of God has been the highest, the inspiration

of man has been fullest, and his progress greatest. Civilization has followed the truest faith in all ages. This idea of God answering to the fact of God makes the race optimistic and urges it onward to its goal.

The world is not growing worse. Mankind is not degenerating. The race has survived the fall of empires, centuries of bloodshed, ages of darkness, the extinction of nations, the doom of religions, tyranny over the masses, the throttle of freedom, and has risen to the sublime height of religious tolerance, political democracy, Christian enlightenment, industrial society, the advancement of science and the arts, equality of opportunity, co-operation in reforms, state schools and charities, free speech, and all nations have been brought into closer relations and sympathy by modern means of communication, travel, and commerce. Ever forward the divine Shekinah has led the race, and it has fol-

lowed with faith in its destiny. Men may doubt, but man believes. Men may despair, but man achieves. Men may face the past, but man looks into the future. Men may deny God, but man demands him as an explanation of the divine principle within him, and for the perfection of the kingdom of heaven in the earth.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GOAL OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

AFTER all it is the individual rather than the race that suffers. It is the individual also that is conscious of life, that apprehends God, that anticipates a destiny. And yet there is a sense in which the race as a whole feels the force of any great fact. No blessing or calamity can come to any part of the world without the rest being affected by it to a greater or a less degree. The influence of truly great and good men is world-wide. Great inventions, great discoveries, and great achievements lift burdens from the backs of toiling millions who are grateful. Ideas that inspire, reforms that restore hope to the helpless, philanthropies that illustrate the feeling of God for men, sacrifice that follows the example

of the Cross, all touch the heart of the world as though the race had but a single soul. So also when any part of the world suffers from a great famine, a devastating tornado, a cruel war, an oppressive tyrant, a degrading religion, the whole of the world's heart is moved.

But the real sufferer is always the individual; and in his disciplining the race and his advancement of it in all that constitutes the world's redemption, God has sought the good of the individual man; the very being who has felt the keenness of sorrow, the despair of doubt, and the crushing burdens of life. And, though he may never have been aware of God's guardianship over him, though he may not have thought he had a soul, though the idea that he was appointed to a destiny divine and eternal may never have dawned upon his darkened mind, nevertheless he was God's child, and God was caring for him as a father cares for his own.

However it is easier to believe this when one does not think of all that it implies. When one experiences only the gentler forms of God's discipline, it is not so hard to bear them and believe there is love in the chastisement. And when one considers only the higher types of life and character that are seen in the world, it is not difficult to believe that in them God's methods have all been salutary.

But faith must be measured by the tests which it has been able to stand. Some are thought to be strong in the faith whose trials are but trifles, and are not to be named with the mental and physical agony which others have to suffer, and that not for days only but for life, and for no known fault of their own. So, when one's life is all serene, buoyant, and prosperous, with only an occasional disappointment or sorrow; when health and home and hope fill one's heart with constant gladness; when none of the experiences or surroundings



of one's life force him to consider the inequalities of existence and opportunity among men; when all the abortive, distressing, dependent specimens of human beings are unknown or unthought of; when all the numberless millions of the race who now live, and those who in the past have lived and died as the beast whose yoke they bore, are eliminated from the problem of beneficence and justice in the moral government of God among men; when any one is insensible to all these facts that make the problem so difficult, and because of his insensibility finds it easy for him to believe, his faith can not be called either durable or strong. It is of the sickly, hothouse type, and when the test comes will fail. But thoughtfully to face the facts and yet believe is not so easy at all times. And yet God has a plan for every man's life; there is a moral goal for every man to reach; and God is wisely and graciously guiding him and guarding him, that he may safely

reach that beneficent end of his being. The nature of both God and man makes it unreasonable to think or believe otherwise.

But it is impossible to feel that God is equally good and just toward all men if we limit human life to this world. A future life must be assumed. The inequalities in this world are so great that the remnant of righteousness that every intelligent man possesses declares that it must be so.

A large part of the human family never know what life means, never feel a responsibility, never have the first opportunity, never know or think or feel. Those who die in early infancy, causing only grief to parental affection, will surely be given an opportunity hereafter under the heavenly Parent's care, of becoming the intelligent, moral beings that they would have been had they lived to think and love and feel and trust and labor as others have in this world. These infant spirits do not disappear from God's loving care. He has an

end in view for them, and to that end he will ever direct their developing minds. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. What a consolation this is for all those who have loved and lost!

But the problem of life is more difficult of solution, and the tax on one's faith heavier, when we try to harmonize the goodness of God with the existence of the feeble-minded and the foolish. If ever there is occasion to question the immaculate whiteness of God's throne it is here. It is not for any wrong that they have done that they have thus been deprived of all except a mere animal life, or that plus a very feeble or a degenerate or an unsymmetrical mind. And yet it is not too much to believe that a world of truth and love and life shall some time astonish their wakened, intelligent spirits.

We know little of the relation of the soul and body more than that they mutually affect each other in some mysterious

way. A high fever causes the mind of the patient to wander. Alcohol makes the mind of the inebriate stupid, foolish, or furious. Great grief will dethrone the reason. A clot of blood bearing on the brain will destroy consciousness altogether. So, too, any abnormal development of the brain will prevent a normal development of the child's mind. But the God of infinite goodness has not doomed these unfortunates to mental and moral darkness and nothingness forever.

If so small and worthless a thing as a seed will lie in the frozen earth through the winter months, or retain its vitality through years and even centuries awaiting conditions that will cause it to grow and bear flower and fruit, is it unreasonable to think that a mind which is cramped and suppressed by physical conditions will, when these hindrances are removed, begin to unfold its intellectual and moral powers which have so long been latent? It is a

cause for gratitude that these unawakened minds that are a source of sorrow and humiliation to parents, and objects of pity and unsightliness to others, shall yet see the light and follow it as it leads them upward toward God and perfection. The Father ever keeps watch above his own. The eternities are his, and if some souls come to consciousness and development later and under different conditions than others, who are we that we should indict his goodness and wisdom or doubt his justice and his design?

Again, the world is full to-day, and in the ages past has teemed with human beings who never have had a fair chance of being what they had a perfect right to be as men. Some have been borne beyond the social dead-line, born of vicious parents and brought up in ignorance, immorality, and filth. Such are the unfortunate masses that make up the slum population of our great cities. They never have had the

helps to a worthy, industrious life that have been the very breath of life and inspiration to others. They never have known the happiness and comforts and protection of home. To cleanliness, sufficient clothing and food and fuel; to schools and books and friends and flowers and music and honor and truth and Church and thoughts of God they are strangers. They can not be judged as others are, because they have never had a chance to be what others are. Their birth was their doom to a submerged miserable existence. So cursed are they by what they have inherited from generations of ancestors that they afford little encouragement to those who sacrifice to save them to a better life. They never have had a fair chance to be good and pure and cultured and useful in this world. But are they never to have? Are they never to have a chance of becoming what under favorable conditions they might have been? If so, is there full justice in the moral gov-



ernment of this world? But God is just, and his government righteous. It must be that in the life to come these souls so blighted and withered in this world shall taste of true life and better know their high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And what of the millions who have been born into a world of dense darkness! Who have opened their eyes to behold none of the surroundings and feel none of the influences that are the rich heritage of all who are born in the enlightened, Christian nations of the world! Caste and custom, idolatry and iniquity and ignorance, apathy, superstition, hopelessness and helplessness constitute the degrading conditions under which they are born and doomed to exist. It is a dark and difficult problem if a personal Providence is believed to be over every individual among these benighted nations of earth. But if such a personal divine care is not over each to give all a fair chance some time of at-

taining to the fullness of life, the problem of existence is still more hopeless of solution, and drives the thoughtful, serious soul to still deeper despair.

But it is certainly true that, unless there is an extension of opportunity in an after life, so that what these millions lacked in this life shall be bountifully and graciously given them, that they may come to realize that they are God's offspring, they have not had justice shown them at all. The goodness and justice of God assures a full measure of compensation some time, somewhere.

To say that they are ignorant of their state, and therefore are aware of no disadvantage, does not solve the question. It is the righteousness and reasonableness of enlightened minds and honest hearts that are violated if the goal of life is reached by them in this world. But he who dwells in the high and lofty place, who inhabits eternity, extends his beneficent government to

all individuals through all ages, and forgets them not while eternity rolls, and their spirits immortal with faces toward the light aspire to be what God has appointed as their crown and triumph.

Questions such as future punishment, a second probation, and the unpardonable sin the author does not raise. They are not relevant to the subject under discussion. Concerning these deep and solemn questions faith proclaims that the Judge of all the earth will do right. He will do right by every man in this world, and will not abandon him in the world to come. His love and goodness forbid it. If his revelation has not reached all his Spirit has, and the conscience of no responsible soul has been deprived utterly of the sacred touch and some of the holy light of heaven.

Wherever there exists sufficient intelligence and freedom of choice to make a man responsible for the life that he lives, there are the factors that determine destiny.

The soul that persists in righteousness becomes fixed in it, while the soul that persists in sin becomes fixed in sin. The longer a soul follows either course, the harder it is for him to love and follow the other. Character is destiny here and hereafter. It is a beneficent law, though the violation of it be so fatal in its effects. Nevertheless it can not be said that these badly born and badly bred beings have an equal chance of being true men and true women with those who are born in refined, intelligent, Christian society.

In addition to sufficient light from the Spirit of truth to enable the inquiring soul feebly to trust a God of infinite pity and compassion, and dimly to hope in his mercy, there is need of a wholesome stimulus to mental activity, a bracing moral atmosphere, social surroundings to develop individuality, cleanliness and clothing and comforts to cause them to feel a legitimate pride in their decency, together with the

sights and songs of God's beautiful world and the artistic touches that have been given it by human hands. But it is these latter things that so many are deprived of, and the deprivation of these things accounts for their moral depravity.

To what, then, can this condition of these multitudes be attributed? It is certain that they are not all wholly irresponsible for their own state. No one can be held wholly responsible for a bad state, or be given the entire credit for a good state of life and character. Heredity and environment largely make us what we are. But it can not be denied that the laws of heredity and bad environment have hit these wretched degenerates of the earth harder than they have those who are more highly favored. This accounts for their worse condition. The gravitation downward is greater than the attraction upward. For this God is not at fault, but his justice will not fail to hold others largely responsible

for it. His justice will surely call the favored classes who have passed by on the other side to account. It will also bring to judgment the progenitors of this low-born population who have bequeathed to their offspring such a curse as their heritage. But it must be that this same divine justice will also remember to compensate in some way these objects of pity to the full extent of their disadvantage in this world.

There is profound philosophy in the diversity and inequality of gifts among men. But this does not mean that the man who has the few ordinary talents is less favored of God or less a benefactor of the race than the one who is more richly endowed, providing he makes use of what is given him. The brawny laborer is as much a man as the brainy author, and merits as much the world's homage. There is necessity of such a diversity of gifts to provide the race with its diverse needs.

But the mysteries of life do not lie in



this direction. It is apparent to all that the good things of this life are not given to good men in much greater measure than they are to the evil. This is true to such a degree that many insist that the bad fare even better than the good. This is the mysterious fact that is so hard to reconcile with the government of a good God among men. When a state or nation enacts a law that benefits only a few citizens, while it violates the civil rights of the majority, we attribute it to political demagoguery. And when in civil court there is a miscarriage of justice, punishing the innocent man and letting the guilty go free, it is due to insufficient evidence, a prejudiced judge or jury, a discrepancy in the law, or some influence that defeats the course of justice and deprives the citizen of his sacred rights.

But God is infinitely good and just and wise. It can not be said of him that he desires the good of one soul more than another, that he favors one above another,

that he is ignorant in the smallest degree of the circumstances of any man's life, or that his laws are ever imperfect or inoperative.

And yet we see unscrupulous, immoral, blasphemous, cruel men in the full enjoyment of health and public favor, having all the comforts and luxuries of life that great wealth can secure, while thousands of toiling, honest God-fearing men are ever face to face with want and struggle from year to year to keep the wolf from their door.

We see the most useful and influential men and women taken out of the world at the time when they seem to be most useful and most needed, while men and women who are wicked and full of all uncleanness are permitted to live on to pollute society and propagate their species.

We see some violating continually every law of health through all the years of a long life-time, who nevertheless retain the full enjoyment of good health down to

old age, while others who are prudent and temperate and take extreme care of their health are smitten with lingering disease and are forced into retirement to suffer in silence through weary years until death sets them free.

We see the poor and the weak crushed and cursed by the rich and strong, the innocent suffer at the hand of the guilty, the avaricious grow rich and haughty while they prey upon the lives of helpless women and children, the truthful and honorable suffer because they are true and honest, villains laugh while saints weep. All of this do we see in a world where God reigns and remembers every soul and makes each one the object of his loving care.

It is not always easy for every one to believe that this is true. The bitter experiences that most of us have to suffer or see others suffer, while we realize our utter inability to help ourselves or comfort them,

make it hard to be submissive and trustful at all times. But it is in the very difficulty that we have of reconciling these apparent contradictions of divine goodness, and believing with never a shadow of doubt, or an approach of fear, that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose, that the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father are hidden.

God is not displeased with us in our efforts to understand all that we can about his dealings with us. This is a part of our high calling. But neither our efforts to understand nor a knowledge of his purpose concerning us will suffice to unfold in us the best that we are capable of becoming. We are moral beings, appointed to a moral career and destiny, hence the problems of experience are wisely and graciously designed to develop the higher moral and spiritual elements of character in us. We were not made for this world, but it was

made for us and adapted to our use and end. It is therefore pre-eminently a moral world. If, therefore, so much of it lies beyond the reach of our understanding, if so much of it lies out of the range of our judgment of what is just, if so many of our experiences are too heavy for us to bear, it is not solely because God chooses to hide himself from us, or because he wishes to be severe with us, but because he wants to see us made complete, bearing the likeness of his own lovable nature.

One of the noblest faculties of the soul is faith. It leads in realms where reason is lost and where knowledge fails. In commercial matters business would be at a standstill if men did not have faith in each other. Friendship, fraternity, and love are founded on the faith that we place in others. Christian work would become uninteresting, hopeless drudgery, if it went on at all, were it not that we firmly believed in the savableness of sinful men and were

confident that the truth of the Gospel is the bread of life to souls that are famishing for that which nothing of this world affords. Such an important factor is faith in the formation of Christian character that the word of God teaches us that by it we stand, by it we walk, by it we live, by it we overcome, by it we inherit promises, by it mountains melt away and insurmountable difficulties disappear. It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Thus it is that by faith we may see the unseen and raise ourselves to lofty heights and repose peacefully in God's goodness and faithfulness toward us. In a religious sense faith is one of the sublimest attributes of character of which the human soul is capable. It is especially spiritual, and without it no soul in this life or in that which is to come can be in harmony with God and happy under his dispensation.

But the development of faith requires a



sphere in which we can not always see our way or know the reason of things. If we could trace out all of the mysteries of life and follow all effects back to their causes, if we could see as God does the beneficent outcome of all our sufferings and witness as he does the daily glorification of afflicted, sorrowful souls who trust his care and are sustained by his grace, life would afford no opportunities for faith to act and become a grace of God's image in our souls. This world and life's experiences in it, therefore, are a necessary means to the great end of our being as we shall some time see, though our eyes are yet too dim to behold it.

Charity, philanthropy, love, sacrifice, virtues all akin and all Christ-like, need the opportunities and occasions which just such a world as ours affords for their manifestation and development. If there were no poverty there would be no call for charity. If health and happiness, and freedom from sorrow and suffering and de-

spair were the good fortune of all men, no man's sympathy would be stirred, little love would be manifested, or kindness shown; but selfishness and cold-hearted disregard of others would abound. If equal opportunity and means were afforded all of obtaining a living or an education or a social standing or the blessings of Christian light and hope, there would be nothing to elicit the great philanthropies, set in motion the great reforms, or call forth the sacrifices which bless the world.

The mysterious social bond that makes the world's pulse beat as though the race had but one heart leads us to recognize every man as our brother and sacrifice selfishness to the rights of others. Thus is Christian society formed for the mutual good of all. The bond of heredity also which causes the life-blood to flow from generation to generation, carrying with it the vigor of health and intellect and industry and character, or the virus of disease

and imbecility and indolence and crime, is an everlasting appeal to every one to practice the highest virtues, not for his own good alone, but for the good of generations yet unborn. There is not a noble trait of character which is not quickened and perfected by the moral mysteries that crowd into our thought and experience in this world, and there is not one of them which would not lie dormant and weak in our souls and leave us more unhappy and the world more miserable if we had just such a world to live in as our shortsightedness and love of ease would choose. The world that we have is the best; it fits our needs, though it may not meet our ideal.

It is well for us that we do not have our own way more than we do. For certainly nothing could be more fatal to our highest good than for us to have just what we want and have the world move as we should like to see it. We are all human, and it is human to shrink from suffering. We would

rather see than believe. But if God should take us by the hand and lead us along the smooth paths of life; if he should answer all our inquiries, solve all our problems, and make plain to us all mysteries; if he should freely grant all our desires for ease and honor, health and happiness, prosperity and length of days; if he should keep us blissfully ignorant of all our faults and defects and mistakes and shield us from public censure and a piercing conscience when we do wrong; if he should keep us from coming into contact with the disgusting and unsightly objects of sin and disease and brutishness and villainy and all distressing types of humanity; if he should take us into his council and consult our wishes about seasons and storms and climate and temperature and crops; if he should ordain that laws shall have no penalty, sin no retribution, and that we be the unconditional recipients of peace, perfection, and life eternal; if he should grant us

these and all other rash requests of our selfishness, ignorance, vanity, and weakness, it is not hard to see what the consequence would be to the world and how utterly the end of our creation would be defeated. We should have a world void of all beauty, life, excellence, and order; a world of misery, darkness, and death. And we should be void of all mental and moral character, rising little above a merely brute existence and having no aspirations to be anything better.

No one is wise enough to know all that is best for himself or for others or for the world, much less for the ages to come. And yet who is so blind as not to see that most of the mysteries of life have been good things in disguise? He may not see them all to be so. No one is wise enough for that. But if he viewed life in its true perspective, if he saw from the central position of the throne of wisdom and love, is it not probable, even certain, that he would

see all things working together for good?  
In that light would he not see light?

In our thoughtlessness we wish that we might see the beneficent end of our suffering, if there be one, and in our selfishness and weakness wish that we might reap the benefit and be spared the pain, little thinking that we would have to be infinite in our prevision to see the end, and that it would only be pampering our peevishness to be spared the ordeal of suffering.

God covets for all men the happiness that can come only to such as are in harmony with himself. His methods of molding us into his own likeness vary from severity to gentleness, but in all there is the love of an infinite heart. But such is our nature that there seems to be no other way of developing in us the highest degree of spirituality. It is easier for us to see love in his gentleness, but there are times when we all need experiences of a different kind.

But there are worse things than sor-



rows and adversity and even death; and there are better things, too, than ease and prosperity and even life itself. To charge God with cruelty and doubt his love for us; to love evil rather than good; to live a life of shame instead of a life of purity; to be selfish rather than self-sacrificing; to be the cause of sorrow and lead the innocent to ruin, when we should scatter sunshine wherever we go and be examples of godliness in conduct and character; to crush the weak with still heavier burdens, when we might lift the loads of life from their tired shoulders; to cast thorns and flints in the path of weary travelers, rather than make life's journey smoother for them; these and many other things are infinitely worse than innocent pain and poverty and disease and death.

Those who are blessed with health and strength for the activities of life are to be congratulated. What a delight it is to have a work to do and strength to do it! To

have a body that is free from pain, a heart full of cheer, a will resolute, a mind clean and clear, and go forth to life's battles to win one's way and earn a living for loved ones, or, in the more retired relations of life, to beautify the home and make it a very heaven of happiness, is certainly sweeter than any earthly song ever sung. To be favored with wealth and influence and social advantages and great opportunities for usefulness are things for which all who are so favored should be humbly grateful. It may seem to all such that they are creatures of God's special care, and their good fortune may cause the less favored to envy them their happiness.

But with all these riches of health and wealth and opportunity are given immense responsibilities, and therein lies the danger-point. Is it not a fact that the favored ones more often forget God and are less grateful and possess fewer graces of the Spirit than the unfortunate? Is it be-

cause the sufferer is given more grace than is afforded the fortunate? Is it because earthly supports have all given away and he casts himself upon God, while his fortunate brother trusts earthly things and thinks them sufficient? Is it because the afflicted has God in all his thoughts and makes his seclusion his Bethel, while the man of affairs has no time to devote to spiritual things? Is it because the one is having such a busy time or such a good time now, that he does not think of the future or prepare for a day of accounts, while the other, having fewer attachments for the present and greater longings for the life that is without tears, trusts God and waits with patience and hope? Whatever be the cause of the strange contradiction, there is food for reflection which neither the fortunate or the afflicted should fail to consider. But the end that God has in view for every one is a life of union with himself, and the attainment, through his

grace and by his providences, of the image of Christ, the exemplar of all mankind.

The sufferer is not one whom God has forgotten. Sooner will a mother forget her only child; sooner will the patriot turn traitor to his country's flag; sooner will angels cease to chant the *Te Deum* of the highest heaven; sooner will the Church militant cease to war against sin and bear no longer the ensign of Calvary to a lost world; sooner will God himself cease to mark the orbits for circling worlds and let the universe fall into chaos; sooner far will all this come to pass than the time when the Father of love shall cease to guard with gentle solicitude the sufferer who looks to him for refuge.

To such as trust in him he giveth songs in the night. Though no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are

exercised thereby. There is compensation, but it is only for those who receive the discipline of life in a teachable spirit. How the sufferer endures life without God is hard to see; and to be without the good things of this life and have no hope for the life to come, is a state too sad to think upon. But for all who are in sorrow or sore trial of any sort there is the power of transfiguration in their suffering. The sick room and the disappointed, secluded life have worked the most wonderful transformations and triumphs that the angels of God ever witnessed.

Our divine Lord was a man of sorrows and experienced in grief. But the path of suffering which led to his crucifixion led also to his glorification. By this he showed us the mystery, without explaining it, that if we would be with him and be like him we must follow his steps. If we suffer we shall reign with him. There is wisdom not

like our common philosophy, and ways of learning it of which the schools know nothing. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. The pure in heart shall see God. If we would learn, let us remember that it is to the teachable spirit and the humble heart that the way of knowledge stands open.

It is not supposable, however, that we could see his plan for our lives from the beginning to the end. He has many things to teach us, but we can not bear them now. We must learn in life's kindergarten before we can walk with God along the highways of knowledge. Now we know in part, but if we are teachable we shall come to know even as we are known. We may not know why we must suffer, and suffer too when others do not. But life is crowded with mysteries, though it is those that come into our own experiences that impress us



most deeply. We do not know, but we know that he knows, and that is far better. If we knew more we would trust less and be better satisfied without God. But knowledge waits for us if we will be patient. We shall know, as the sorrowful old patriarch knew ages ago when he said in reply to his accusers: "Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I can not perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I can not behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I can not see him. But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold."

If we must suffer instead of serve, let us suffer as heroically as we would serve. It may be that suffering is the highest service we can give to the world. If it is harder to suffer than it is to serve, and we suffer well, we must be serving well. Thereby we will also be magnifying the grace of God

so freely given to all in every time of need. Then let patience have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. For he will not break the bruised reed, he will not quench the smoking wick until he sends forth judgment unto a victorious end.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE.

IN the problem of divine government providence and prayer are both implied as fundamental factors. For divine government implies intelligent moral subjects who are conscious of responsibilities, who feel their dependence, who aspire for things that are excellent and spiritual, who think of duty and destiny and God. But if no such intelligent moral subjects existed there would be none to feel after God or seek his grace. Prayer would then be a thing never uttered by man, never heard by God.

On the other hand if, as some think, God were so far above the world as to take no interest in us who are the subjects of his government, if, as is claimed, when he

created the world and established its goings according to self-acting laws, he ceased to care for his creatures or listen to their cry, then there would be no providence. We would be left to the cold mercies of heartless nature, with no Father above to satisfy our hearts. Our prayers would return to us as empty echoes from ears that do not hear, and from a heart that never feels.

Prayer is the passion of the devout soul for God, the pleadings of the dependent soul for his mercy and his grace. Providence is the response of infinite wisdom and love to the needs of him who seeks his help from God. But so great is God's knowledge of his creation, that there is nothing too profound for his comprehension and nothing too simple to claim his notice; and in all his wonderful world there is nothing that so commands his special solicitude and tender care as souls immortal. He forgets not even the sparrow and

the flower. But men are the creatures who, more than all others, have a place in his thoughts and a home in his heart.

But if God's knowledge of us and of our needs is so perfect, and his love for us is so great, why should it be necessary for us to pray in order that we may receive from him the help that we need? Must he still be pleaded with that he may be prevailed on to grant us his forgiveness, his grace, his care, his light, his deliverance? Notwithstanding his knowledge of our needs and his love for our souls, is there still a slight reservation in his disposition to bestow his mercies upon us in the fullest measure which requires pleading upon our part to have turned in our favor? If this is true, is God as good to us as he would be if he fully and freely gave and forgave us all, so that we should never need to supplicate his throne? How much is the course which God would have taken with the world, or any part of it, and especially

with those who pray, changed by the prayers which are offered by men, however devout they may be? If in divine government there is a place for prayer, and prayer in any way affects the providence of God, may we ask anything that we desire with the full expectation of having it granted us? Or, after all, does prayer do more than change a man's character and his attitude toward God? In a government of an infinitely wise and good God over a world of dependent, imperfect men, has prayer a place and a power? and what are its limitations?

In all our meditations upon these questions we must take our departure from the triple truth that God is a moral Sovereign, that man is a moral subject, and that the government of God in men is administered with the view to perfecting their moral natures, and thus finally perfecting a moral world.

That moral evil exists in the world re-



quires no argument to prove. The appeal to conscience is sufficient. Moral evil is in the world, and there is every evidence and reason to believe that God wishes to get it out. But why did he let it get into the world, and how did it get in? Could he not have kept it out? For, of all the appalling, dark facts in the universe of which we have any knowledge, this fact, the presence of moral evil in the world comes nearest to being a stain upon the white throne of Deity. It is, of course, a characteristic only of moral beings; that is, of beings who, when they do evil, are able to do good instead. To what extent it exists beyond this world and in spirits departed who once had this world as their home, but now dwell we know not where, we have no means of knowing. But it is in the world, and we know that God can not be its author.

The probability that evil would get into the world rose when man was created. He is a finite being. There are limitations

upon all his powers. If there were not he would be God's equal. But his knowledge was very imperfect; he was certain, therefore, of making the mistake of thinking sometimes that evil was good, or that good was evil. His will was imperfect; he was therefore likely to choose the evil course instead of the good. Evil in the world is therefore due to the fact that man is not God, but simply imperfect man. And had he been anything different he would not have been man at all. God is then not at fault, unless his fault be in his having created man at all. The evil that is in the world originated in the finite, not in the infinite, and that because it is finite. There was as great a probability that moral wrong would get into the world through the acts of imperfect moral beings, as that there would be physical pain in bodies having a nervous system.

This is as true in the theory that evil is only a stage in the evolution of man from

inanimate matter to a moral and immortal destiny, as it is in the theory that it had its origin in the fall of man from a state of perfection which he had at his creation. The only difference being that in the degeneration theory the evil crept in by the wrong choice of the first parents of the race, and has been passed down to all succeeding generations as their sorrowful inheritance; while in the evolution theory it came into existence somewhere along the line of human development at the point where the human soul rose to a self-conscious and self-acting intelligence, knowing right from wrong, but preferring the wrong instead of the right. In either case the wrong had its origin in beings who were conscious of pursuing a wrong course in preference to a right. Evil is then in the world as an innovation, and not as a necessary feature of God's moral government. But as it is in the world, the government of God implies a place for both providence

and prayer, that it may be exterminated from the earth.

But so intricate and wise are the ways of God and so great is his goodness, that we do not always know what limitations providence places upon prayer. Our ignorance and self-interest may often lead us to ask for things that would defeat the wiser course of providence should our requests be granted. But there is one thing for which we may pray with the assurance that our desire will not be contrary to the goodness and wisdom of God. We may pray to be saved and kept from sin, and be conformed to the divine image. In this human prayer and divine providence never, never conflict.

And yet sin is a relative thing. That is, the iniquity of it in the sight of God and its blameworthiness in us is measured by the standard of our intelligence of what sin is and the strength of our wills to resist wrong. What one man may think is right,

another may think is wrong, and what one may have power to do, another may be unable to do. But if sincerity be the very substance of all our pleadings, we may be confident that God will forgive sin and give us to feel that he has done it. He will also give us light on questions of duty and guide us in paths of right. The God who is perfect in goodness, and wishes all men to bear his image and do his holy will, rejoices to hear the prayer of souls who seek him; it is for this very purpose that his throne is set in the heavens. He rules to rid the world of wrong. God answers the prayer of him who prays for the forgiveness of his own sins, and to have his own mind and will and heart firmly fixed to think and do and love the right.

But when we pray for anything beyond this we may not be sure that our prayers will always be answered, even though God's will and our own agree. We may pray that others be saved and kept from

sin; we may pray that widely prevalent social sins may cease; we may pray that organized wrong may be put down; that, for instance, the drink evil may be outlawed, that wars may be no more, or that the nations may enact no unjust laws and be interested in no iniquitous business. While all these requests would be in harmony with the divine will, they might not be realized, because that might mean the arbitrary turning of other wills from the course of evil that are resolutely set in the opposite course.

Again, while we may be sure that God regards all sin, whether individual, social, or national, with righteous disapproval, and would have it all to cease in all his moral kingdom, there are other things which we may think are evils that infinite wisdom may not consider such. We may pray that providence may rule against them, and wonder why it is not so; but there is wisdom greater than ours in the



direction of affairs of this world. We are unable always to determine what evil and good are, or to whom and under what circumstances they are such; but God is. We may think that the death of a President is a national calamity, and the Christian world may pray that God spare his life for the good of his wise counsel and the influence of his noble example; still, the prayers of the millions may not be answered. But what man with his little mind and short vision can tell truly that the President's death would be a calamity? For the present it may so appear, and many who do not believe in either prayer or providence may conclude that his death, notwithstanding the prayers offered, and the nation's need of his wise leadership, is proof that neither prayer nor providence avails anything for the good of the world.

The same question may be raised upon the death of any one whose life we pray may be spared. But who knows when the

work of any man is finished? Who knows when it is best for him that he be taken out of the world? Who knows when it is best that those who have relied upon him be thrown upon their own resources? Of two things we may be sure: we may be sure that God knows, and we may be confident that no good influence that any man has exerted in this life shall ever perish from the earth. The good and the true are divine, and the divine never dies. To say that

“The evil that men do lives after them,  
The good is often interred with their bones,”

is abominably pessimistic. It is not true.

In the wise providence of God may it not be best that the good go away when they do, just as the Master said of himself when, with Calvary and the cross in sight, he tried to console his sorrowing disciples, saying: “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away I will send him unto you?” Our Lord an-

nounces here a universal principle. In the minds of his followers the death of our Lord was a fatal blow at the kingdom of heaven. But after his departure the wider conception of the kingdom dawned upon them; the larger experience came to their hearts; the richer consolation filled their souls; greater power was given them; the local and the temporal were seen to be universal, spiritual, and everlasting.

Likewise when the good, the useful, and the beloved die it seems a strange providence, and when prayers are offered that it be not so, it may seem to some stranger still that they are taken. But the influence for good that they had in life is at once liberated and enlarged, and though they be dead they yet speak. As a result hearts become more humble, lives are made more useful, sympathies are broadened, and often do we see noble charities and great philanthropies spring up to commemorate the dead and bless the living for many gen-

erations. That which is sown is not quickened except it die, and except it be quickened it can not bring forth abundantly fruit of its kind.

Nevertheless it is human to sorrow over personal loss or bereavement, and stand in awe at any great calamity, but care should be taken not to hold grievance against God on account of them. For if we saw the combination of causes that bring them to pass, it might surprise us to see how little God was responsible for them, and how much others, and possibly even ourselves, were the cause of them. We know that when time has given us the true perspective we have never seen that God has done wrong or made any mistake, and if we wait it is certain that the things over which we now sorrow and suffer will be dissolved in the same light.

There is moral evil in the world, and so closely related is the moral world with the physical, not only in the interaction of

our minds and bodies, but also in the interaction of the moral world with the material world, that we do not know to what extent the calamities in the physical or natural world are due to disturbances in the moral world. Excellence of character, recognition of the laws of life and reverence for God tend to a corresponding perfection of body, while a life of sin and lowmindedness leaves its ugly marks on the face and the physique of the wrong-doer.

It might be rash to affirm that the imperfections and dire calamities of the physical world are also equally the consequences of the moral condition of the race. But there are certain facts which lead one to wonder whether the whole creation does not groan and travail together in pain because of the moral condition of the world. We see imperfections in all animal and vegetable species, and we see among them the ravages of disease and suffering and death. May this not all be a consequence

of the sin which God foresaw would cause frailty and mortality in men: may nature not have been stamped with these marks to teach men lessons in humility and sympathy with all God's creatures? Again we see in all the lower orders, both plant and animal, the process of reparation take place when an injury is sustained. May this not be the primer lesson of the redemption truth which afterward and co-ordinate with it was unfolded to an intelligent, sinful world in the book of revelation?

At any rate, these facts are suggestive that, after all, world catastrophies and individual sufferings may be due to moral evil either as their cause or their occasion. The universal blight and blemish that mark the whole animal and vegetable world, including man's physical and moral nature, point to some great calamity that has befallen our world. And as the highest is the moral, and all else is made subservient to it, the indication is that the occasion or the



cause of it all was moral evil, which had its effect first on man's moral nature, and then on his physical, which is affected by the moral, and that all nature bears the same marks of imperfection for the purpose of ever reminding man of his sins, of their consequences, and of his moral condition.

Mankind has ventured to violate the laws of God's wise and beneficent government, and suffers as a consequence. But providence is not at fault, and if prayer is not always answered to avert evil, one must not conclude that it is of no avail. In view of the moral condition and needs of the race and of ourselves, many of the things which we regard as evils may, for our good, be necessary as well as providential, and if we learn the lessons that they teach and profit by what we learn, they may all be turned to good account for us.

Again there is consolation and hope for the world in the fact that sin is self-destructive, while righteousness is self-

perpetuating. Sin kills itself by limiting the powers and shortening the generation of evil-doers. As sin is not of God and is outlawed in his government, it is something unnatural in the world. It is in its very nature a discord. It throws confusion into the otherwise harmonious natures of men, and weakens and limits their every power. Drunkenness, immorality, anger, hatred, debauchery, avarice, blasphemy, all leave their evil effects on the souls and bodies of men, and in a few generations the stock becomes extinct unless a counter force of righteousness and thrift is introduced and saves it.

But righteousness is harmony. It makes music in the soul, and is in tune with God and the kingdom of heaven. It strengthens every power of the mental and moral and physical nature of man. It is self-perpetuating, because it perpetuates the generations of good men. Hence it is written: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous

God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them (generations) that love me and keep my commandments."

The law of revelation is only a transcript of the law of nature. Both are of God, and in both there is wisdom and goodness. By this law evil-doers are cut off, they do not live out half their days, and the meek are given to inherit the earth. The beneficence of this law should cause all men to rejoice. In its operation largely lies the hope of the world. If iniquity made men strong and lengthened their life; if it gave no man a disadvantage; if it never made men cowards or took from them the confidence of the people; then we should have reasons to fear for the triumph of righteousness and have grounds to question God's discrimination in favor of the good.

Here, again, prayer and providence are co-ordinate and fundamental factors in moral government. Both are set against evil for its extermination. Prayer enables men to trust God; it takes from them all elements that are antagonistic to the will of God; it links them with God and makes his strength their own; the feeling that they are identified with the Almighty One gives them courage to face the wrong and defend the right; it strengthens every mental and moral power that they possess. Thus does God make the beneficent effects of his law an eternal object-lesson, teaching the world that he that sins against him wrongs his own soul, and that the just shall live by his faith.

Whether the human wish expressed in prayer changes the will of God or not, of this we are sure: It changes the moral character of the petitioner. For prayer is more than merely verbal utterances which may be meaningless for the want of sin-

cerity. Prayer does not necessarily require the use of words at all. Prayer is communion with God. It is open-hearted fellowship; it is an attitude of duty, life, and devotion; it implies trust in the Father's wisdom, love for his ways and his word, the merging of our wills into his, and submission to every order of his providence. Yes, there are times when language is worthless to express the desires of the soul. The human tongue can not even stammer out the deep longings of a true heart for God and spiritual things. We can only be dumb with silence. We can not even think the thoughts of waking divinity within us. That which is begotten of God must be left to him for interpretation. The Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered.

Prayer changes us and gives God a changed appearance to us. It lifts us into his likeness, and gives to us a correspondingly clearer knowledge of him. We see

him more as he is, but the change is in us rather than in him. And yet the change in us makes it possible for him to do for us what he otherwise could not have done. He then can give us consolation in our sorrows. He can sweeten every bitter cup of a life of toil and suffering and disappointment. He can give us grace for every trial. He can make clear to our minds many of the mysteries of life and teach us the moral lessons of others. He can make plain the path of duty. He can make the future radiant with hope. He can take from death its terrors, and from the grave its victory. He can make us more than conquerors through him who hath loved us. God does not have to be pleaded with to have him do what he otherwise would not do. But we have to plead in order to put ourselves in a position before him to be blest. His disposition toward us is not changed. Infinite love has no degrees of



greater or less. It is always changeless, boundless.

His infinite love makes it impossible for him, also, to break up the stability of his righteous government and nullify his moral laws, that the sinner may be as happy in his sins as the saint is in his holiness. He will not throw his world into confusion to please the foolish who pray for what they should not have. He will not answer petitions which those who offer them are able to answer themselves. He will not prevent our plunging into moral ruin, though we pray to be led not into temptation and be delivered from evil, when we deliberately or wrecklessly go into forbidden paths.

There can be no harm done in praying that the sick be restored to health, that the lame be made to walk, that the blind be given sight, though there are fewer prayers for such things answered as they are offered than many claim and want the world

to believe. It is not disputed that they do sometimes occur. But it would be easier to determine their frequency if all superstition, imagination, deception, and ignorance in each instance were cleared away. The truth is that the best people get sick and die, notwithstanding their recovery is the subject of the prayers of many whose piety and faith can not be questioned. And the worst get well, though no prayer is offered in their behalf. What little human mind then can tell when such prayers are answered in the way they are offered? Not one.

Often good people pray for directly opposite results. During the late Civil War millions of devout prayers were offered for the triumph of the Confederate arms, while as many and as God-fearing people prayed that victory might come to those who bore the Stars and Stripes. Christian generals and Christian soldiers in the ranks fought and prayed against each other.

God could not answer both as they prayed, but he did answer both in the best way for all. He gave us a better and a more united country.

All true prayer is answered in the way that seems best to infinite goodness and wisdom, though it may not be as we ask. "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me," may be the soul's cry; but if it is from a spirit that reposes in the Father's care, it will always be qualified by the humble submission—"nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And when those who know not what prayer means deny its efficacy and wonder that the afflicted do not fly petulantly into the face of providence, then the true and trustful child of God will ever answer: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Though prayer is not always, perhaps not often, answered in the way that we ask, still it is answered. For, if in our ignorance of what is best for us, we

asked for what would be a serpent, instead of a fish, do you think he will not rather give us a fish? It is always the good things of the Spirit that he gives. If the thorn is not removed, he gives grace sufficient to bear it. If the cup does not pass, behold an angel will be sent to strengthen us, which is far better.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ILLUSTRIOUS SUFFERER.

It is better to know how to suffer well, than it is to be exempt from it. The lesson may be hard to learn and the experience disagreeable, but if we endure with fortitude and faithful submission to the will of God we shall some time see its refining effects in us and rejoice. In this is hidden the deepest philosophy of the loftiest life. In one form or another suffering in some measure is the lot of every man, but all learn more readily every other lesson than they do this of submissive suffering. But God who governs the world in righteousness has not failed to show his beneficence and his sympathy in teaching us the lesson which we so much need to know.

This was in part the mission of our

Lord to the world. He came as the Savior of sinners, but the salvation of sinners implies instruction in the spiritual philosophy of bearing the burdens and sorrows and perplexities of life with heroic patience, a stout heart, and a filial trust. Christ came to teach the world not by precepts only, but chiefly, and with a much greater emphasis, by a living human example, how all the hardships of life can be made the path that leads to transfiguration heights.

In the sufferings of his Son, God reveals the sufferings which he himself shares in common with all mankind. It may not be strictly philosophical to make such a statement, but philosophy does not teach us the deepest truths of life, nor does it help us much in our understanding of them. That which concerns all men most, even men of science and culture and philosophy, is the understanding of the daily experiences that spring up from the depths of the heart as it is wrought upon by the



varied and numberless influences that crowd into human life.

Pure reason might conceive of a God who reposes indifferently in his absolute sovereignty over his creation, but the heart requires a different idea of him. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and it intuitively interprets the divine heart as it is—full of pity and compassion for suffering humanity. The issues of the human heart are all calls for help, and the issues of the divine heart are all answers to these calls. It is life with all its hopes and all its fears; life with its toils and its trials; life with its cares, its duties, and its responsibilities; life with its dangers, its mysteries, and its longings; life with its doubts, its darkness, and its despair; yes, it is life in all its depths, its significance, and its unknown future that lies closest the heart of every man, and it is this that touches into sympathy the heart of the Father.

Hence even at the risk of being unphilo-

sophical it is safer and more helpful to believe in a God who sympathizes with men; that is, one who suffers with them. It does not compromise his character to think of him in this light. We want a God who helps us, and there is nothing that helps us more than to know that God feels for us.

Nor is such an idea so much of an outrage on philosophy. For the absolute perfection of God must imply that he has power to reveal himself under limitations. If he can not manifest himself in forms that are less than infinite, he can not be even infinite. He is bound by limitations of the infinite, which is contradictory. If he is infinite, he must be able to descend into the finite. If this were not true, he could not even be the creator of the world; for it consists wholly of finite forms of the infinite; neither could he make himself known in ways plain enough for human understanding. We can not reach up to the

infinite, but the infinite can and must come down to us.

God suffers with us; we know it, and love to feel that it is true. The sufferings of our Lord are the revealed sufferings of the infinite Father's heart. In his trustful submission we see the spirit in which the Father would have us endure the ordeals of life, and in his glorification which followed his life of trials and toils and tears we are taught the compensation which awaits all who follow his steps. No fault can be found with the government of God because of the existence of suffering among men. For the good of man requires it. But the glory of God's reign is revealed in his appointment of his only begotten Son to teach us how to suffer.

But we should not think that because Christ was divine his experiences in life were less painful and more easily borne than ours—making them a mere show. It was their reality that makes him a real

Brother to us. His experiences were not a pretense. He has not so deceived us. Though he may not have experienced all the peculiar trials which this one or that has endured, yet so great, so numerous, so varied, and so typical were they that he is able to enter into sympathy with every soul, and all men may feel that his heart is touched with compassion for them.

Too much stress has never been placed on the physical sufferings of our Lord and Master, but certainly too little emphasis has been attached to his mental anguish and the violence done his every sense of righteousness and spiritual propriety. Reverence requires caution when we come to compare the physical sufferings of the Man of sorrows with those of other men; for we do not know to what degree they were intensified by the indescribable sufferings of his soul. We do not know how much greater power of endurance or how much more sensitiveness to pain the body

of a sinless man possesses than that of a man who has weakened the fiber of every nerve by sin and bears in his body the consequences of the sins of his fathers. Neither do we know how much more crushing to his body were the great mental conflicts of Christ than are the mental struggles of the average man as they weigh upon his physical nature.

But our Lord was a toiler of the toilers. He glorified the lot of the laborer by being himself a carpenter. It seems that from his youth there rested upon him the responsibility of supporting a widowed mother and a family of brothers and sisters. In addition to this there can be no doubt that he devoted much time to meditation, to fasting, to prayer, to the study of the law and the prophets, and to charitable deeds and sacrifices such as characterized his public ministry.

When the silent years at Nazareth were ended he began his public life hardened for

the hardships which it required. Weariness, hunger, and exposure must have been almost daily experiences with him as he journeyed from city to city and from country to country, by day and by night, alone, with his friends, his foes, or the curious, selfish, morbid-minded multitude. He was not complaining of his lot when he said, "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was stating a fact.

It may not be irreverent to say that these sufferings and privations of our Lord did not surpass those of the vast majority of toiling men and women of to-day. Nor would love be less ardent if it should be said that many have suffered as intensely as the Master did during the last day of his life in the flesh. But when we have said this let us reverently draw a pall over those hours of cruelty and crime against innocence and love. They can not be de-

scribed without detracting from their intensity and the love that bore them. Description would be desecration, and the failure to portray them a mitigation of the moral madness of those who put him to death.

Our Lord's sufferings were mental more than physical, and in this respect he shares the lot of the great mass of human sufferers. Men suffer in mind more than in body. In common with all other men the Master experienced the destitution that is due to loneliness. There is, however, a kind of loneliness experienced by others which he never knew. He never felt the loneliness that is caused by selfishness, sin, or sensitiveness. But how many there are who feel lost and deserted even while they mingle with the multitude, because they have broken every bond of friendship and ruined all the respect of their fellow-men by their obnoxious claims of superiority and their ambitions to supersede others by



any method no matter how unscrupulous! How many there are, too, who have made themselves utterly repulsive by lives of sin and have driven from them all associates except companions in crime and sin! and even they often make loneliness more lonely and the desert-life more dreary. And how many there are who are so suspicious of the sincerity and faithfulness of their friends that they make their own lives miserable, while they merit the loss of those who are worthy and true!

Our Lord was lonely, but from none of these causes. Nor was it due to the mere absence of others. That in itself does not leave a soul alone. Loyal friendship and true love know of no confines. They will fill a desert with a multitude though no one be near, while the lack of them leaves the soul alone, even though a crowd be pressing on every hand. The Master had friends and followers who loved him as well as they knew how, but he was to them

all a mystery. His views were so lofty and broad, his vision so far, his purpose so high, his character so matchless that he was a sting to the conscience of his generation and a constant disappointment to his disciples. He stood absolutely alone in the world for the want of friends who were able to have more than a faint idea of the real greatness of his character and mission. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Neither did his brethren believe on him. There were times in his life when he seemed to feel desolate for the want of sympathy.

When he had finished that wonderful discourse on Everlasting Life in the synagogue at Capernaum, how grieved he felt because many of his disciples were offended and said it was a hard saying and refused to hear it. His deep humanity longed for sympathizers who touched souls with him, and when from that time many of his disciples turned away to walk with

him no more, with what sad, lonely anxiety he turned to the twelve and asked if they, too, would leave him!

Again his suffering weighed upon his soul in Gethsemane as he alternately sought consolation, first from his Father in prayer, then from his weary disciples. He felt the need of help from both, but his disciples failed him in his hour of greatest need. How utterly abandoned by them he must have felt when he returned to them from communion with God and found them asleep, while the tumultuous mob, led by the apostate disciple, was approaching to arrest him! Who can conceive of the disappointment which wrung from his lonely heart the words, "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" In that hour of peril he was concerned for his disciples as well as himself, but chiefly for them. And yet his humanity craved human comfort as well as divine, and when his only friends allowed the weakness of the flesh

to overcome their willing spirits his trial was truly great. He had warned them of their weakness, and told them that they would be unfaithful; and so they were. Thomas doubted him, Peter denied him, Judas betrayed him, all forsook him.

Lonely, deserted Sufferer! Behold him in the council chamber of the Church, while his silent greatness so exasperates the guilty souls of the high priest, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, and the entire council that they throw aside all restraint and justice as one and all they begin to spit upon him and beat him with rods, and, blinding him, strike him in the face with their fists, and taunt him by demanding that he prophesy who it was that struck him! Behold him as he stands in Pilate's court, while from thousands of throats is heard the mad verdict that is instigated by the apostate Church hierarchy, Crucify him! Crucify him! Behold him in the guard room given over to the Roman

soldiers, who crown him with thorns, strip him and throw about him a cast-off robe, beat him in the face with their fists, insult him, mock him, and, bowing their knees before him, derisively hail him as King of the Jews! Behold him again as he hangs spiked, hands and feet, to the cross, and as you look through tearful eyes listen to what he says: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Lonely, illustrious Sufferer! Truly he trod the winepress alone, and of the people there were none with him.

Have any been misunderstood and misjudged when they had no motive but the highest, followed no course but the truest? Have any lost their associates and been shunned by friends because, on account of their plain living and high thinking, they were regarded as too good to get the best enjoyment out of life? Have any grown old, so that the years have taken from them the friends of their youth, their life-long associates, and their nearest and dearest

kinsman? Have not even their children and the companions who, through a half-century or more shared their joys and their sorrows, been spared them? Do they look around them for the attention and the relation that they once enjoyed, and find that the busy world has passed them by and forgotten them?

Have some been thrust into seclusion and retirement by affliction? Once they were familiar and influential spirits in the business world; they were active in the affairs of public life, their voices and their devotion were given to the good of humanity, the Church of God, and the cause of the Cross. Their enthusiasm still burns with the same old fire. They desire to take their places again in the world's activities, but they find that they are little missed and little mentioned, while their places are filled by others. Are they not lonely? Are the griefs of some so great that they can not be comforted, even though true friends



shed tears of sympathy and try to fill the places once occupied by others? Are the lives of some but deserts, because in their distress they fear that even God has forsaken them? Lonely souls, with sorrow-bowed heads and grief-broken hearts, whoever you may be and whatever the cause of your loneliness, God as a Father suffers with you and has revealed his fatherly feeling for you in the suffering, lonely Christ.

Again, no man ever had the true sense of right and spiritual propriety that our Lord had. His sinlessness, his lofty ideals, and his keen perception enabled him always to strike the line of cleavage between right and wrong with perfect exactness. His judgment of the motives of men was therefore always just, and the wrong that they did to others was always an outrage upon himself. For, as he mingled with men in an age of sham and injustice and crime and cruelty and corruption, his high sense



of what was just, pure, humane, sacred, was violated as that of no other man ever was. The cause of truth, humanity, and God lay so close to his heart, was so woven into his entire nature that all wrong and irreverence was to himself a personal injury. It was not a fit of passion that possessed him when he drove the traders in sheep and oxen and doves from the temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers. To him nothing in God's world was without sacred significance, but no place was so holy as the house of prayer, and when he saw the temple defiled by the filth of birds and beasts, and desecrated by avarice, all the sensibilities of his soul were lacerated to the point of intense suffering. So consumed was he by his zeal for spiritual proprieties and reverence for his Father's house, that those who had turned it into a den of thieves fled from his presence, so transfigured was his person and so commanding his tones as he de-

nounced their greed of gain in the house of the Lord.

His condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees was not an invective tirade against his enemies; for he loved his enemies as he taught that others should. But he saw piety turned into a pretense by the religious teachers of his time. He saw how they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men and went not in themselves; how they devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayers; how they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, who, when he was made, was but a child of perdition; how they painfully kept the letter of the law and the traditions of men, while they omitted the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, faith, and love toward God; how they loved the uppermost seats in the synagogues and the greetings of the market-place; how they bound on men burdens that were grievous to bear, while they touched them not with one of their fingers;

how they disfigured their faces and put on a sad countenance that they might appear unto men to fast, while they were full of all hatred and hypocrisy.

Such insincerity toward God, such degradation of holy office, such wrong done the sacred rights of souls, such blind leading of the blind, such obstruction to the entrance into the kingdom of God was to him high crime against all that is holy in heaven and earth. It grieved him. It was a sight that saddened him wherever he went as long as he lived. They might call him a sinner, a Sabbath breaker, a blasphemer, a devil, a mad man; they might dog him at every step, ply him with catch questions, try to trap him, weave a web of conspiracy about him, stir up the people against him, incite the fear and jealousy of the civil power, resolve on putting him to death; all this he could endure with equanimity, and utter not a word in self-defense. But the moral crime of the age and the

hypocritical religious tyranny of his time were to him a perpetual grief. They required rebuke; and in his scathing, consuming denunciation of them there must have been in his voice such inimitable pathos and power, and in his face such an expression of sadness, sweetness, and fearlessness as to terrify his foes and sting them into fury as he tore the mask from their depravity.

Our Lord also suffered from his close and life-long contact with the power of darkness. Objects of shame and sin that he everywhere witnessed and the moral obtuseness toward truth and right and purity that characterized the crowds that thronged him were a source of sadness. For he was grieved at the hardness of men's hearts, their sensuality, their morbid curiosity, their self-interest, and their slowness to believe. But he also suffered from the temptations which he underwent. There could have been no significance in his temptations if in them he did not suffer,

and suffer terribly. To have sin and unbelief suggested to his pure mind through forty days of fearful conflict must have been an ordeal the severity of which is more than we can imagine.

Nor were his trials ended in the wilderness. We are told that when the devil had ended all these temptations he departed from him for a season. The plain inference is that other temptations followed, and that all through life he had seasons of moral conflict against sin, just as all his brethren in the flesh have. He suffered as we all suffer in resisting evil, and we love him because of this fact.

All of our Lord's sufferings were in their spirit vicarious; that is, they were all voluntarily endured for others. But there is another meaning to his suffering too deep for any finite mind to fathom. He suffered in our stead—the just for the unjust. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. The Lord hath laid on him the in-

iquity of us all. The Bible abounds with passages, teaching that in some way Christ bore the sins of a sinful world. And yet it is impossible for sin to be transferred from one person to another. And if it were possible it would take with it the guilt of the sinner, so that if Christ could be burdened with the sins of men he would thereby be the chief of sinners. But this is a thought too terrible to entertain. Theories and theories have been formed to explain the sense in which Christ suffered for the sins of the world. But they are only theories. Upon this profound theme the Bible, however, does not theorize. It is proclaimed as a precious fact that Christ lived, suffered, died, and rose from the dead to save men from sin, and give unto them enduring life. Language labors to tell even this much. It tells the fact in its many phases, but the deep and the eternal truth itself belongs to that large class of spiritual mys-



teries that wait for us until our beclouded vision is clear enough to see.

Now, in all of his suffering what was the spirit in which he bore them? Never did he complain, never was he censorious or morose, never did he doubt or despair, never did he envy others their easier lot or shrink from his own. Never did he blame others for any of his sufferings or show an unkind spirit toward even his betrayer or those who conspired against him to send him to the cross. Through all his physical sufferings, his sad loneliness, the violence done his sense of right and religious propriety, his conflicts with the evil powers, and his atoning life and death, our Lord was always the same serene, majestic Being.

There is always grandeur in a godly life. While one holds firmly to the powers above, they in turn hold him, and he feels the security which they afford. This truth is exemplified to us in the matchless life



of the Son of man. He believed that all wrong was doomed to a final overthrow, and that evil-doers would meet with a like fate. He believed that this was his Father's world, and that nothing could pluck from his hand any who trusted in him. He believed his Father guarded the eternal interests of his moral kingdom, and that all who fell into its sweet harmony had enduring life. He believed that all men were the children of the heavenly Father, and that the Father and the children could hold communion with each other.

He therefore committed himself unreservedly, trustfully, lovingly to his Father and to the future with its fulfilled promises, and he had his compensation. While he was in the world he had glorified his Father, and confidently expected to receive from him reward for his suffering, his service, and his devotion, and he was not disappointed. So confident was he of his Father's faithfulness, of the transitori-

ness of suffering, and of the eternal triumph of all that is holy, just, and true, that at the moment when one of his chosen twelve turned his back on him and that holy fraternity of disciples, when almost within hearing of the brutal mob that came to arrest him, when the mockings of the trial were sounding in his ears, and when in the very shadow of the cross, he could say to his broken band of followers: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Such were the sufferings of Christ and the glory that followed.

Thus does God interpret himself in Christ. Thus does he vindicate the whiteness of his throne to a suffering world. He has not left us to grope in darkness and despair, not knowing whether there ever shall be any beneficent compensation for our sufferings, our faith, and our patience. For our sake his own heart was moved with tender compassion; for our sake his well beloved Son became the incarnate revela-

tion of those sufferings; for our sake he bore them with fortitude and faith in God; for our sake he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; for our sake he, the captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering; for our sake God glorified him to teach us that if we suffer we shall be glorified with him. Illustrious Sufferer, help us to have the mind that was in thee and follow thy footsteps! Heavenly Father, help us to believe that thou doest all things well, and patiently to wait until we can understand.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE.

VANQUISHED faith, sincere doubt, and honest inquiry may still wonder why God should create a world that involves so much mystery and pain. But this amounts to the same as wondering why he created the world at all. For, had he created a world that was free from suffering and mystery, it would have been so unlike the world which he has created, and we should have been so unlike what we are, that another world and a different order of beings from what exists would have taken precedence. The question is then the same as asking why he made this world instead of some imaginary world which we vainly fancy he might better have made. Such questions are both foolish and arrogant.

The fact is that he has created this world and has created us and placed us in it. This is all that common sense calls on any one to consider. We are not arrogantly and ignorantly to inquire into what God might have done, but reverently and thoughtfully to study into what he has done, that we may get more nearly to the heart of things, and receive consolation from the assurance that there is beneficence and wisdom in the world's order.

But what was God's motive in creation? This is a fair question, for its answer leads to devout meditation on his good-will toward us when he brought us into being and fitted up this world for our habitation. God could have had no other motive in creation than supreme love. No other motive is conceivable in the heart of infinite goodness. He could not have created the world for himself alone, for that would be making him the very personification of selfishness. He could not have made it because he was

in need of it, for that would make him a being who is not self-sufficient. He could not have created it because he had to do it, for that would mean that there was a power above him compelling him to do it. It is absurd to think that he did it without any interest at all in what he was doing, or that he did it as a mere pastime.

But what could his motive have been? What must it have been? To this there can be no other answer than that the God of all perfections could have had no other object in his creation than that of bringing into life beings who, like himself, would be able to think and feel and love and choose and take delight in all that is pure and beautiful and true. Knowing that he himself was the personification of all that is excellent and the source of all that is true and good, God brought man into being that he might hold fellowship with his Creator and learn to love him for the good that he would derive from such holy relation. God cre-

ated man for the purpose of adding to the universe more of the rapture which he feels in the truth and the holy harmony of things. It is a joy to him, for their sake, to have his creation take delight in him.

Love was supreme in creation. As white light is the blending of all the prime colors of the solar spectrum, so love is the harmonious balance and blending of all moral and intellectual attributes; and infinite love is the harmonious union of all God's perfect attributes. In his creation God put forth his entire self. He is love; therefore in all his handiwork love was supreme. Love accounts for the world, and accounts for its being continually what it is. For creation was not a single act that God put forth unknown ages ago; but it is a continuous act. He ever constitutes the world what it is by his changeless, creative love.

In all things love reigns supreme. It is in the harmony of the spheres, in every



beam of light, in every shadow of solitude, in every sighing breeze, in every scene of grandeur. It gives sweetness and rhythm to all life, it flashes in every crystal, it blossoms into loveliness in every flower, it burnishes every thing of beauty, and ripples into all the laughter and song of earth and sky.

It is most delightful and profitable to dwell on the divine beatitudes that beam in radiant love in God's world everywhere. They do not engage our thoughts as much as they should. If we read their messages to us they would fill our faces with sunshine and our souls with song. Most people, both the fortunate and the afflicted, take the world and life too sadly. We live too much in the dark hemisphere. But if we tried we could trace even in the darkness the lines of light that reveal God's love for us. For love reigns in the darkness as well as in the light. It reigns as much and probably more where we can not see it as

where we can. It is for the want of sight, and not on account of the absence of love, that we are unable always to see it. The eye untrained for the beautiful can not see beauty where the eye of the artist observes it with delight. The vulgar eye may prefer a common chromo to a masterpiece of Raphael, but the master artist knows their respective values at sight.

The highest type of the beautiful is that of the spirit, and if we do not see love supreme everywhere it is because our eyes are not perfectly trained for the spiritual art. Gently the rays of light fall upon us from the Sun of Righteousness, but we can not follow them back to their source. Too much of the earth are we for that. We may be able to read the illustrations of love in the more agreeable experiences and scenes of life, but hidden in the mysteries that surround us are depths of love into which angels desire to look.

There is a hemisphere of light, and no

number of volumes could tell all the plain manifestations of supreme love that compose it. But there is a dark hemisphere also, which is to us as great a reality as the light; for it is what we see that is real to us, even though it would prove to be unreal if we saw all things as they are. God sees no darkness at all. To him all is light, and he is the Father of it. Hence love reigns in the darkness as well as in the light.

Love reigns in all the laws that govern the world and human life. So beneficent are these laws that they are almost identical with love. For the laws are God's ways of working and governing in the world and in human affairs, and love is the concurrent activity of all his powers. It is therefore not far from the truth, if indeed it be not in fact the actual truth, to say that love is law, and law is love. If there is severity and pain and death and deep mystery attending these love-laws that govern us, it is due, not to their char-

acter, but to our violation of them. And even in this penalty there is love. For the laws are not for the purpose of destroying men's lives, but saving them. The love is couched in the moral purpose that is hidden in them. But if they were all cushioned with down, so that when we ruthlessly ran against them we would not be hurt, there would be no love in them. If in our ignorance or full knowledge of them we disregard their mandates and they send us back to the better way, there is love in them, even though we return bruised and bleeding.

Thus it is that suffering prevents suffering, calamity cures calamity, death lengthens life, ignorance stimulates intelligence, and sin tends to make itself horrible. A clearer sense of duty and a greater conscientiousness are quickened. Their severity and impartiality force the individual to greater care and more strenuous effort to avoid injury to himself; and if he has

the heart of a brother, they lead him to guard well the interests of his fellow-men. Records abound showing how whole communities and cities and states and nations have taken steps to stop or to prevent the spread of disease and poverty and crime and accident. The brain and heart of the world are continually at work in every conceivable way endeavoring to lift men into a life where they will not kill themselves by standing in the unalterable course of the laws of God. For none of his laws were made for those who keep them, but they are all made to be schoolmasters to lead to a better life the ignorant and the evil-doer. If this were not the order of divine government, no care or effort would be taken to rise above the laws, and the mental and moral life of the world would remain undeveloped. These laws are then not the reekings of wrath, but the loving arms of a Father thrown around us to restrain us

from wrong and constrain us to the right. His love-laws are then our life-laws.

By such guardianship over us we get some idea of what sort of beings we are. One might be so impressed with the sublimity of the silent, speechless mountain that lifts its white peak above the clouds as to worship in silence at its altar; so suggestive is it of the Infinite. But what is a mountain as compared with a man? It thinks not, neither does it feel or hope or love or have a duty or a destiny. The inspired bard of Israel gave us the true estimate of man's greatness as compared with material things, when he said: "When I consider thy heavens the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" Had he been a materialist, here he would have ended his song and thought of man as only an atom, lost

and unknown in the glorious galaxy of revolving worlds. But he was not a materialist. He saw man's place in the universe, and had some conception of God's estimate of his worth. Hence he continued: "Thou hast made him to lack little of divinity, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Because man is made in the Creator's image, love supreme hovers over him and throws its protection around him. So hedged in is he with love that he can not get away from God without hurting himself.

Again, the supremacy of love is revealed in human redemption. If man has sinned, love reigns to redeem him from it. Had God abandoned the race when sin entered the world, love would have been missed when needed most. It might abound in divine government everywhere else, but if it should not be manifest in re-



deeming grace its greatest monument would not appear, and the throne which love makes white would no longer be stainless. But man is redeemed. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

But redemption was not an afterthought that flashed into the divine mind when sin entered the world. The substance of redemption was born of supreme love, and that love is as eternal as God. Time has no bearing whatever on the loving purpose of God toward his creation. Redemption is an eternal fact, but it became historically manifest in the world when sin became a fact of human experience. Nor did redeeming love first appear when the Son of God was manifest to take away our sins. Men were saved from sin before Christ came, for God loved them as much before he came as he has since. In all nations and in all ages love divine proclaims that he

who feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.

But as redemption is an eternal fact, it is also one of the eternal secrets known to God alone. How it is possible for man to be redeemed from sin we never shall know. All attempts to explain its mystery must begin and end in speculation. The fact is, that God can be just and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus, and Christ the eternal Son of the Father has ever been in person the expression of that redeeming love. The highest point in the manifestation of that love was the incarnation. But the Son of God was the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. He was also the central factor in human redemption through all the ages that preceded his life on earth. While in the world he had power to forgive sins, and since his ascension on high he has been the world's only hope. The dispensation of the Spirit, which began in a fuller measure upon the

glorification of the Redeemer, is but the continuation of the same eternal redeeming love that mercifully flows from the heart of the Father. The same eternal, mysterious, glorious fact of redemption through Christ continues in his intercession with the Father for us. What that means we can not know, but it certainly can not be that the God of eternal compassion must be pleaded with to be persuaded to show pity and grant forgiveness and eternal life to sinful men. Nevertheless the truth is revealed that the Savior of the world in some gracious sense still continues on high the work which his Father gave him to do. Christ the eternal Son is the essential factor in human redemption. He co-ordinates and gives significance and force to all other facts and influences that work for man's salvation.

Again, love supreme is manifest in the conditions and the completeness of salvation. We are not saved in our sins, but

from them. It would only be mocking us to save us in them. However, to be saved in our sins is not only a contradiction of terms, but is inconceivable on God's part. There is no salvation which is not a transformation into the moral image of God, and that means the forsaking of our sins because we hate them, and our coming to Christ because we love him. Call it conviction, repentance, consecration, confession, restitution, duty, service—call it all these things; for, losing sight of one's self and contemplating the character and the matchless mercies of the Savior and submitting our wills and hearts and service to him without reserve forever, implies them all.

But so great is the love of God in Christ Jesus that our coming to him means rather our willingness to let him come to us. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. It is not the sinner who is the seeker, but Christ. It is not Christ who is unwilling, but the sinner. It is not the

sinner who pleads, but Christ. It is not Christ who is changed, but the sinner. Wholly to abandon and abhor sin is to transfer the affections to its opposite, which is purity. Wholly to surrender self is to yield to Christ.

The completeness of our salvation depends upon the thoroughness of our consecration to Christ, for he is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. Call his salvation justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, the inner witness. Call it all of these; for, when we without reserve submit ourselves to Christ, he graciously forgives our sins; he invigorates our moral nature by the gift of his life; he owns us as his brethren, and the Father owns us as his children in and through his well beloved Son; the life which he imparts begins the process of renovating us of the dead remnants of the sinful life; and the Spirit inspires in us a clearer spiritual knowledge of our relation

with God, and reveals to us so fully the fact that we are in moral union with him that we can with joy exclaim, "My Father!" and feel that the Father's response to us is, "My child!"

In both the beginning and the development of the Christian life there is a uniformity and a continuity of process that is due to the life principle which Christ, who is our life, imparts to us, and which has its exact analogy in the developing process of every living thing. Upon this Christ-given life there are placed no limitations either as to possibilities or duration, because it is a life both divine and eternal. We are partakers of the divine nature, and because Christ lives we shall live also.

But what finite mind can approach in thought or imagination the sublime significance of Christ's gift to the believing soul of eternal, imperishable life? It is a birth from above, and the life that wakes within at once begins to seek its heavenly source.

Powers of soul that found in the lower sphere of life no conditions favorable for their development, at once begin to reach upward. Love finds in God and all things holy and just and good a world that is congenial, attractive, and invigorating. Faith which was confined within limits too narrow and too earthly for its nature at once takes hold on the unseen substance of spiritual reality. Hope takes anchorage in the life beyond, and abides in the goodness of God. There is not a power of mind or heart which the new life in Christ does not wake to its normal, spiritual action. The soul becomes allied with God, and enters into loving co-operation with him to make his world beautiful with love, joy, and peace.

The saved soul becomes a component factor in the sweet harmony of God's moral kingdom. And what a kingdom! And what a harmony! In duration it is from



everlasting to everlasting. The granite hills shall melt away; the earth shall leave its orbit and fall into the chaos of crashing worlds; Orion, Arcturus, and Pleiades shall cease to travel the holy aisles of heaven; the sun shall be turned into darkness; the heavens shall be rolled back as a scroll, and as a vesture they shall be folded up; but beneath the scepter of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Father, the kingdom of heaven shall still remain and move on in sweetest harmony with his holy will. For in it no forces ever clash, no laws ever fail, no truth ever goes astray, no beauty ever fades, no light ever loses its luster, no good ever grows less, no life ever gets old, no love ever becomes cold, no joy ever ceases, no harmony ever has a discord. From the time when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God first shouted for joy, rhythm and rapture have rolled upward and onward through all the boundless and

endless moral universe as the sweet expression of the mind and will of almighty God.

This moral universe, this kingdom of heaven, is the home and the heritage of every child of God. He belongs to it, and it belongs to him. He is in it, and it is in him. He holds himself in harmony with it, and it fills his soul with its songs. He apprehends its truth, enjoys its beauties, and partakes of its holiness. There is no place in it where he may not feel at home—no place where he has not a right to be; for it has been the Father's good pleasure to give him the kingdom. His life is not measured by years, but by its possibilities and expansiveness. Divinity and eternity are born within him. Now he is a child of God, but it doth not yet appear what he shall be.

We are all dependent upon God for all things at every moment and turn in life. He knows our needs far better than we know them, and far better than we think he

knows them. He has a plan for the life of each of us, and down through all the years, from the dawn of life, his love reigns over us to realize his plan. It varies from gentleness to severity; nevertheless it is love in its wisest form that is always supreme above us. It reigns to win the wayward, to warn the wicked, to wake the indifferent, to lead the blind, to lift up the fallen, to support the weak, to cheer the faint-hearted, to comfort the sorrowful, to keep the tempted, to establish all with faith in the trustworthiness and lovingkindness of God in Christ. We also may say with Paul's confidence: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We waste the substance of life in sin, but he sends his Spirit to call us back to

our better selves again and draw us to the cross in penitence and consecration, that we may be created anew in Christ Jesus. We break and defile the divine image that is in us, but he tenderly and forgivingly gathers up the fragments and causes them again to reflect his blessed face. We fritter away the years with their succession of golden opportunities, but he takes the remnants of wasted life which we bring and gives to them even unmeasured significance for the years and the eternities yet to come. We become attached to this world greatly to our spiritual detriment, but he sends misfortune and suffering and bereavement to make us tired of the transitory and long for the everlasting.

Higher than the heavens are his thoughts than our thoughts and his ways than our ways. The problems of the world and life are infinitely complex, and we have no teacher to make them all plain to us. The teacher would need a grasp of things

as great as God's to understand them, and we should need one equally great to understand the explanation that the teacher might give. We know now only in part, but it is love that holds our eyes. Faith in that love will give us unspeakable peace. God's world and our life in it are not understood from the earthly and the human point of view. God's angle of vision gives us the only true perspective of them. The farther we get away from the mysteries and misfortunes and sufferings that we see and experience, the less are they the occasion of doubt and despair, and the more of wisdom and love do they reveal. As the earthly recedes and the heavenly draws near, as closer and closer we approach the center of things, and more and more see them in God's light, better shall we know as we are known, and be satisfied.

We live in a wonderful world. God has made it so for our use. He wants it to be sufficient for all our simpler needs, as well



as be suggestive of the boundlessness of the higher moral and spiritual world in which our immortal natures are to find their greatest activities and their richest enjoyments. The greatness that is without and the greatness that is within make life on a large plan possible. This more comprehensive and commanding conception of things is infinitely more inspiring and satisfying to us than the earthly ideal in which the transitory or the trifling gives us endless trouble.

The dark hemisphere may vanquish faith, but it should not. For God ever reigns everywhere, in our darkness as well as in our light. He reigns in wisdom and love, never swerving from his eternal, beneficent, moral purpose for the world and each individual. If his purpose fails, it is due to our intervention, never to his impotence or indifference. To enable us to reach the goal to which we are appointed he mercifully provides all things that make

for life and godliness, and graciously listens when we pray. He sends us his well-beloved Son to teach us how to take life and turn it and all our trials into mounts of moral transfiguration. Over all and in all he reigns in love. There is no other way than to trust his eternal wisdom and goodness. If the future should seem dark, God stands within the shadow keeping watch above his own. There are many things which he desires to say unto us, but he knows that we can not bear them now. What he does we know not now, but we know we shall know hereafter.





